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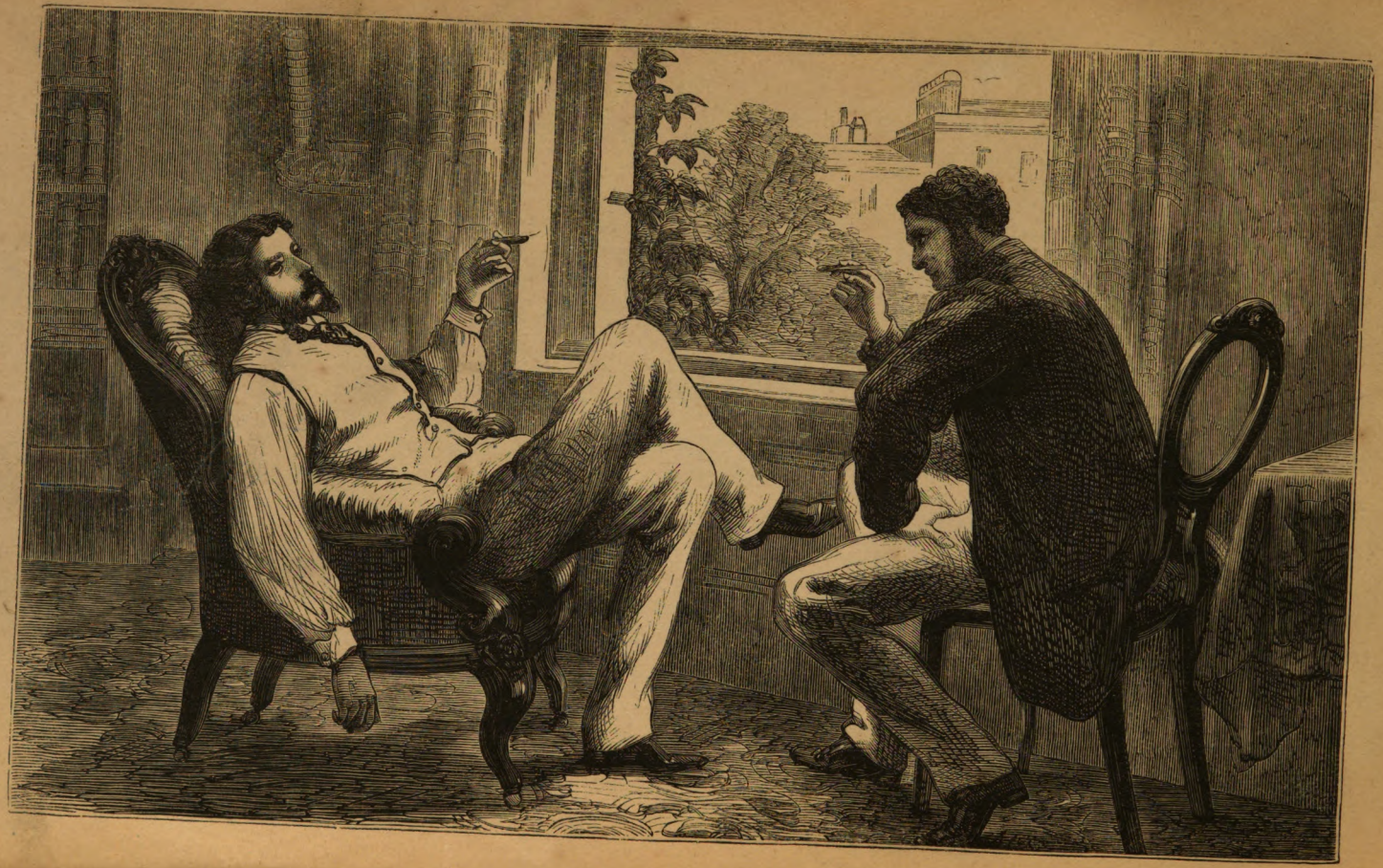

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MY ENEMY'S DAUGHTER.

A Novel.

By JUSTIN McCARTHY,

AUTHOR OF "THE WATERDALE NEIGHBORS," &c.

ILLUSTRATED.

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MY ENEMY'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

RETROSPECT; AND MIST.

It is a wet Sunday evening in the leaden heart of London. I am now in the Bloomsbury region; and perhaps I need hardly say that nothing on earth could be more dull, dingy, and unpicturesque in itself than the prospect from my windows. Yet just now, in the deepening gloom of a rainy dusk, I seem to look on something not unlike one of the most picturesque and romantic scenes whereon my eyes have ever rested. "Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten;" but the ridges of the houses opposite begin to show through the steaming mist fantastically like the outlines of the hills I used to see every day years ago, and the broad blank lying between me and over the way may easily enough seem filled by the stretch of bay I have watched when it lay wild and drear on the wet evenings of late autumn like this. The kindly, loving, artistic fog and rain, which now hide all but the faint and softened outlines of our street, have done this for me; and lo! in Bloomsbury I am looking upon sea and hill once more. The very sounds of London city-life come to help out the illusion. That cry of the oyster-man below is a good deal more like the scream of some sea-bird than most theatrical imitations are like the reality. The church-bells clinking and tolling for evening service are to me now the bell of the church to which I used to be conducted when a boy on Sundays, and with which so many of the associations of my after-life inevitably connect themselves. It used to be a dreadful ceremonial, that service, to us boys, on the fine Sundays of summer. It was bad enough in winter; but in summer it became unspeakably more torturing. There was a window in the church close to where we used to sit—poor little weary, yawning martyrs—and the branches of an elm flapped unceasingly on the panes. Tantalus-torture was it to watch the tender, lucent leaves, free in the glorious air of May or June, as they flickered across the window, and seemed to whisper of the blue sky and the shingly strand and the waves of transparent emerald which they could see and we could not; while the organ pealed and the clergyman preached the long sermon to which we never listened. I do not know how it is, that when I thus sit alone of nights and do not feel inclined to read, or steadily to go to work at something, every object I see, flame, cloud, or even chimney-pot, reminds me in an indescribable, irresistible way, of some object belonging to the dear, dull little sea-port town where I, Emanuel Temple Banks, was born some five-and-thirty years ago.

I have now written my full name, but it is long since I have been known otherwise than as Emanuel Temple. I pruned my name down to its present brevity for reasons which shall be explained in due time. I was called "Emanuel Temple" because my mother had a proper womanly objection to commonplace or vulgar names, and since we could call ourselves nothing better than Banks, resolved that we should at least have euphonious and elegant Christian names. Therefore, instead of becoming, as was suggested, John Banks and Peter Banks, my brother and I became Emanuel Temple Banks and Theodore Eustace Banks respectively. I scarcely know by what process Theodore Eustace and myself were brought up. We were the only children—I the elder by a year—and my father died when I was six years old. He had owned fishing-boats, and was doing well, until, at the instigation of my mother, he unfortunately took to immature building speculations, and failed accordingly, fishing-boats and all going down in the land-wreck. Indeed, my poor father did not remain long after the ruin of his venture, and my mother had to live by making gloves and trying to let lodgings. She had been a genteel woman of her class at one time; and being engaged in one of the few pretentious millinery shops in our little town, was regarded by her friends as having made quite a sort of *mésalliance* when she married my father, who was then only a good-looking young boat-builder, with a fine voice for singing. She was very sentimental then, was poor mother—so she has often told me—and those were the days when the heart of sentimental womanhood was divided between the *Corsair* and the *Lady of the Lake*. My mother loved both, but leaned to the *Corsair;* and found a resemblance between that hero and my father. To her latest days she was fond of repeating whole strings of "My own Medora," and Ellen and James Fitzjames—and I doubt much whether *Locksley Hall* and *Maud* are often recited and raved about and glorified in the shops of provincial milliners just now. Poetry and romance seem to have taken a terrible grip of the female heart at that time, and to have released the squeeze in our days.

Besides being romantic, my mother was likewise religious—a combination which also does

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not seem to flourish in our time. Heaven only knows how painfully she labored and strove to give and get us some education in religion and poetry. She loved her sons dearly, weakly, and her most passionate prayer of nights was that they might never, never leave her. The dearest wish and ambition of her heart would have been that one of the two might become a gentle clergyman, and the other, whatever his ordinary pursuits, a church-warden. If she had lived until now, oh! what a Ritualist she would have been! Her prayers for the future of her sons were not even half granted. One of the sons went, very young, to America, and became a Rationalist. The other came up to London and turned opera-singer.

As soon as I could write a decent hand some good-natured person got me a situation in the office of an attorney and land-agent. I began as the youngest and lowest of clerks—a sort of cross between a messenger and a scrivener's apprentice—never, of course, intended to develop into that pretentious grub the articled clerk, who in his time develops into the attorney. I had five shillings a week to begin with, and I think the head clerk had a hundred and fifty pounds a year. Perhaps, but for subsequent events, I might have worked up to hold that position, and receive that emolument, in my turn. Indeed, I mounted very steadily up to thirty shillings a week, but there I stopped and got off the ladder. Before I had attained that eminence, however, my brother, who had tried one or two situations unsuccessfully, and was always alarming my mother with his longing and projects for going to sea, compromised matters by resolving to seek his fortune in America. My mother had to consent at last—indeed, hard times allowed her no choice—and some poor outfit was scraped together. It was arranged that I must stay at home and work for mother until her sons should become wealthy men, when we were to live in one country and one home, and she was to keep house for both. We had much crying and feeble keeping-up of each other's spirits, and we parted full of grief, but not without hope. Theodore Eustace took with him the latch-key of our door, with which he used to let himself in of nights, promising himself and us that he would return before long, laden, doubtless, with wealth, arrive unexpectedly, and opening the door softly, steal in upon my mother and me as we sat some evening by the fire and talked of him.

He wrote to us when he got a situation in a dry-goods store, Broadway, New York, and very soon after, when he lost it; when he went out next and became successively a hawker, a railway-clerk, a photographer, an electro-biologist, a newspaper correspondent, and a farmer. In each successive calling he was most positively to succeed, and to make up for all the time—never very much, that was one comfort—which he had lost in the vocation just abandoned. He never remitted any thing except a sketch of a forest clearing, and a dried mosquito as a specimen of the animal life of the New World. I think my mother placed the mosquito's corpse tenderly in her bosom. He has sown all his wild oats long since. He was lately married for the third time, and I believe got money, or property of some sort, with each of the wives. He was just the sort of bright, exuberant, reckless, blundering, soft-hearted fellow whom a certain kind of women, and all dogs, and all animals of tender natures indeed, instinctively take to. He has many children, and is well-to-do now and steady. He still writes, although at long intervals. He says he has the latch-key still, which I doubt—Theodore Eustace was seldom very literal in his statements. But even if he has, it will never open the door for which he meant to use it. Were he to return to our old street, so sunny and pleasant in summer, with its glimpse of the sea through every lane, he would find no creature there whom once he knew; and the place itself would know him no more. The little row of houses in which we lived has been pulled down long since to make way for more pretentious habitations—marine residences, semi-detached villas, sea-side boarding-houses, and the like. In my own season of success I often contemplated a tour through America as a "star." I thought of setting New York wild with admiration, filling my brother's heart with ecstasy, and cramming his house with presents. Something, however, always intervened to postpone the journey, and before I had finally made up my mind the best of my voice had gone, and my reputation was pulled down, like our old house, to make way for a new erection upon a more secure basis.

From my father I had inherited a good voice, *et præterea nil.* There are families through which a good voice appears to move in order of primogeniture; and I have observed that a fine tenor, thus bequeathed, rarely seems an inheritance which brings much worldly providence or prosperity. My father was always under the impression that he only wanted a lucky chance to have made him another Incledon, who was of course his hero, and whose rolling, quavering, florid style, unknown to this generation, he did his best to imitate. I can not help thinking the fishing-boats and the building speculations would have fared a good deal better if my father had had no more voice than a grasshopper, and had therefore found no admiring idlers to persuade him that he was another Incledon. However, it is quite certain that at an early age my voice became remarkable; and some of my father's whilom admiring idlers did generously take me in hand and provide me with not very inadequate training. My mother's dread of my developing power was turned into confidence and pride when I began to sing in the choir of our church on Sundays. I paused not in my progress until I had actually been promoted to the post of *primo tenore* there, at a remuneration of twenty pounds a year.

This seemed to us what sea-coast people call "the third wave" of promise, on which we were

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to be safely lifted into prosperity. But it came a little too late. My mother's life had long been on the wane. Grief, anxiety, poverty, late long sewing, had been doing for years their combined best with her, and at last she utterly broke down. I was nineteen years old when I found myself watching, in the gray of a cold spring morning, with our clergyman and one or two kindly old women, by the side of the bed in which my mother recovered at last from all sickness and all sorrow. A pale, wan ray of the rising sun gleamed upon the cold face whereon so little of the sunshine of happiness had rested. A quaint little burial-ground clings and straggles along the side of one of the hills which rises over the bay. You may count every tombstone and grave-hillock from the deck of any of the fishing-boats that toss in the surf beneath. Many a monument is erected there by the widow of some lost skipper or mate in memory of the husband whose bones have been tossed ashore on some Pacific island, or have been gnawed and mumbled by the Arctic bear. There we laid my mother, disturbing for the purpose some of the ashes which had been coffined when my father was buried. I came away from the grave alone. The scene I saw as I turned away is before me now. I see it clearly—as clearly as then. The hills—we used to think them mountains—that embraced the long, narrow stretch of bay in their arms; the far line of the horizon; the straggling white town just under my feet; the strand whereon lay the hauled-up fishing-boats; the merchant-brigs and the coal-schooners anchored; the one war-sloop; the tree-tufted summit of one hill, conspicuous among its bare and bald companions; and over all the gray sky breaking faintly into sunlight—as over my own life the mist of sadness and loneliness just breaking a little with the purple light of youth.

I am not going to write of my grief and loneliness. I suffered bitterly and heavily, but the passing away of a year or so softened the grief into a gentle memory. At twenty I was full of hope and spirits again, secretly perhaps even proud of my desolate independence, and believing myself a personage of rare endowments, destined to some special and wonderful career. But because of my mother's death, and other and earlier associations too, the gray days of spring have always worn for me the most melancholy and dispiriting aspect. I see the early spring, not in budding brightness and beauty and hope, as poetical people tell me they see it, but dim, dreary, boding, suggestive of loneliness, associated with partings, graves, and death.

CHAPTER II.

CHRISTINA BRAUN.

I WAS, then, an attorney's clerk all the week-days up to five or six o'clock, and a singer of sacred music every Sunday—a singer in that same little church the sermons and the bough-shaded windows of which used to distract me so when a boy.

I was growing a sort of little celebrity in our small town because of my voice and my supposed musical genius. I mean that I was getting to be known among all that small middle class whose highest reach toward society was the patronage of the clergyman's wife or the attorney and his family. Our town was divided morally, and indeed one might say geographically, into three sections. There were "the townspeople"—ourselves—who lived in the streets on what I may call the middle terrace of the ascent on which chance had placed us. We were all traders, shop-keepers, clerks, master carpenters, a few engineers, two or three teachers of French and music, a good many principals of small English schools, a good many civil servants of the unpretending class. Beneath us stretched, reaching to the water's edge, and straggling away rather toward the rising sun, a lower plateau of population, consisting of public house keepers, rope-makers, block-makers, fishermen, sailors, and nondescript poor people of all kinds—poor people avowing and indeed going in for pauperism. Above us, and stretching away westward, were the villas and mansions of the gentry, the swells who only came into the town to buy at the shops, or to reach the sea. Of these it is enough to say—for this story has little to do with the aristocracy of the earth—that a nobleman who owned nearly all the country round and half the town was the apex of the pyramid, and the base was formed by the fashionable doctor of our district, the attorney in whose office I worked, two or three clergymen, the collectors of customs and excise, and a few retired naval officers. Now these three sections were each a world to itself. Nobody on the higher plateau knew any thing about us except as people who made things or had things to sell; we knew little of the lower plateau except in an equally general sort of way. Therefore when I say that I was becoming a sort of small celebrity, I mean of course only in my own middle sphere. The gentlemen and ladies above knew and cared just as much about me and my like as the tarry lads of the lower town did, or indeed as the crabs and star-fish on the beach might have done. If any grand personage or grand personage's wife had been attracted by my singing at church some day, and had been good enough to ask the clergyman who the singer was, the answer would have been, "Only a young man from the town," and that would have settled the matter. That was enough to know; that was all any body could want to know.

But I was getting to be talked about among people of my own world. I used to be invited out to small evening parties, where, lonely as I was—and at this period having reached the cynical stage, and being professedly scornful of earth's joys—I went very delightedly. I bought

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kid gloves, and wore my collar turned down. Those were not days when even a musical aspirant could venture upon a mustache in a town like ours, or I doubt not that I would have wrestled with Nature to extract by unknown philters and essences the precious ornament from her gift. Of course I was a good deal vain of my voice and my personal appearance. Kind Heaven, which had taken from me so much that was dear, had left me youth's delicious consolation—vanity. Had I not been such a self-conceited ass just then, I must needs have been very unhappy.

We used to practice—we did not call it "rehearsing"—three or four times a week in the choir of the church, the organist being intrusted with the keys for the purpose. "We" were generally four. First was Miss Griffin, the organist, who could sometimes pipe a flat and feeble note of her own. Miss Griffin was a spinster fast falling into years—nay, it seemed to me then quite stricken in years, although I know now that she could not have been far past thirty. But she was very old-maidenish in appearance, with dull hair done into old-fashioned spiral ringlets; a sharp-nosed and perhaps frosty, but withal very kindly, little dowdy. Next in years—but with such an interval!—came our bass, a stout young fellow, son of a master carpenter. Then came the tenor, Emanuel Temple Banks; and last came the soprano, a girl of German parentage and birth, Christina Braun.

Christina, I should think, was then just a little younger than myself. She was the daughter of a German toy-maker, who—half mechanist, half artist, whole dreamer—had striven to make and sell playthings of a new kind, with a scientific, philosophical, and moral purpose about them, for the æsthetical entertainment and culture of children. The philosophical toy-maker did not succeed in winning much of the sympathy of our town for his refined and lofty purpose. He failed altogether, became bankrupt, gave up all struggle thenceforward, and resigned the conduct of existence into the hands of his daughter, who sang in churches and chapels and elsewhere for the means of living.

I used to think Christina a wonderful young person because she had been born in Germany and could speak German. She had at this time been many years in England, and must have been quite a child when she left her native country. We used to pronounce her name as if it were similar in sound with the name of the familiar substance sold in pork-shops. Being at this time of my life still rather shy so far as girls were concerned, I knew little or nothing of Miss Braun for months and months, but that she had a strong voice and fine eyes, and that she had a happy capacity for talking freely enough when any one chose to speak, and remaining contentedly silent when no one did so choose. She was a remarkable girl to look at. She had a great fleece of fair hair thrown back off her forehead, and only kept up in some way or other from falling about her shoulders and waist, which, indeed, it did more than once in the choir, to the great annoyance and scandal of Miss Griffin, who, I think, by the look that came into her eyes, always regarded this little mischance as a pure piece of coquetry. Christina had beautiful, deep-shining eyes, dark gray in color—much darker, indeed, than the tinge of her hair would have led one to expect. She had a bright complexion and a rather large mouth, from which issued when she sang a strange and almost startling voice: we used to consider it somewhat coarse. I don't think I thought her a handsome girl; I rather fancy she seemed to me all hair and eyes. But I have hardly any distinct impression of our earliest meetings, and I positively can not by any effort of memory recall my first sight of one who afterward exercised such an influence over my life, and whom I once so deeply loved. There is no mystery about the story I purpose to tell, and I make known at once that every thing in my existence which is worth recording is in some way associated with the memory of Christina Braun.

We four, then—Miss Griffin, our basso, Christina, and I—used to foregather in the church choir of evenings; and after having practiced as we considered long enough, would very often conclude by going to Miss Griffin's to tea, and there compensating ourselves with the newest operatic pieces for our enforced devotion to sacred music. Miss Griffin and her mamma taught music, and some of their pupils used to help us out occasionally with duets, trios, choruses, and the like. I remember nothing particular about the mamma, except that she was an odd, vivacious, flighty little old personage, who could speak French. I don't know why she considered it proper always to address Christina Braun in French, or why she assumed that a German girl must necessarily be able to understand that language. But she always did so. "*Eh bien*, Christina, *chère petite*," was her usual greeting; and during the course of any conversation, if she had occasion to address a word to the tall and plump *chère petite*, Mrs. Griffin always lapsed into French, and Christina, with perfect docility and gravity, as regularly replied in the same tongue, which she seemed to speak with fluency.

Sometimes I was the only gentleman among all these ladies; and this, perhaps, may partly account for the slight attention I used to bestow upon Christina Braun. Our bass singer did not always come with us to Miss Griffin's, and even when he did he was not much of a squire of dames or demoiselles. On entering the little drawing-room—first-floor front, over a bonnet-shop—he usually laid his hat somewhere on the ground, sat on the edge of a chair, swallowed his tea, bending far over the table for the purpose, and generally said nothing more than "Yes, miss," or "No, miss," in answer to any question addressed to him. He was a fine-looking young fellow, tall, robust, manly; and, although scarcely older than myself, he had his face already fringed with a luxuriant, soft, black beard, the

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possession of which I secretly envied him. Silent as he was in general, I could notice that when he got side by side with Christina Braun he could talk well enough to her; and almost always when he came to Miss Griffin's I observed that he took charge of Christina to see her to her home on our early breaking up. I think I was somewhat amused at the time by observing this fact and founding conjectures on it. The polite reader need hardly be told that a much loftier position in society is asserted by a lawyer's clerk than could possibly be claimed even by the most presumptuous carpenter; and I therefore felt myself warranted in taking quite a lordly and patronizing interest in the love-making of my humble acquaintance; for I felt convinced that our stout basso was in love, and I envied him that privilege. Yes, more even than his beard did I envy him his state of mind and heart. At this season of my life I had begun to long to fall in love. I envied every young man whom I saw on Sunday evening with some girl hanging on his arm or walking with downcast eyes by his side. I trolled out to myself of nights the words of "Sally in our Alley;" and I envied the hero of the ballad, for all his harsh master and his jeering neighbors. If some woman would only love me, walk thus of Sundays with me, lean on my arm, blush when I spoke! Nay, if some woman would even reject my love, blight my young hopes, crush me in the bud, reduce me to despair! At the stage of mental and moral development I had then reached despair and ruin seemed on the whole a finer and more enviable destiny than success and joy. To live in love would be happy; but to die for love would be the lordliest fate.

My life seemed safe enough so far as love's despair could threaten it. I had no one to love. I could not, no, I could not love Miss Griffin, strove I never so wildly. I feel well assured she would have accepted gladly the poorest tribute of homage, even if it lasted but a few short weeks, to cheat her into the belief that she had not quite passed out of date, and could yet move at least one heart. All our literature and our moral lessons now ring the changes upon the nobleness of self-sacrifice. What finer self-sacrifice could any one make than to persuade a kind and true-hearted old maid of a certain age that he had really fallen in love with her, and brighten her life by giving up his own to sustain the beatifying delusion? A more pious fraud could not be accomplished than to practice such a generous piece of cheating on such a woman as poor, elderly, warm-hearted, loving, unloved Miss Griffin. I commend the idea to some novelist. Why not make a story out of it? But I own that, even had the idea occurred to me at the right time, I should not have dreamed of putting it into practice; and even if I had dreamed of it, I should never have done it.

There was none of Miss Griffin's pupils who could have served as an object for my adoration. They were all in trowsers and short frocks; and at that time of my life girls in trowsers were my abhorrence.

When haply my thoughts sometimes turned to Christina Braun, she seemed too calm and silent, and too fond of music. In those days I did not much care for any singing but my own. There are only too many people who, if they would but confess it, are in just the same state of mind—people who have, of course, none of the true artist's love of music, as, honestly, I never had. People like us in that way often delight in our own singing, if we can sing, not out of mere self-conceit and egotism, but because to us that music which our own voices give out is the fullest expression, the strongest invocation, of feeling and association. Many tenors of the richest tone, and sopranos thrilling up to the ceiling, have I heard without feeling one throb of the emotion which used to swell within me long ago as I sang old church-hymns or new sentimental ballads of love, longing, and despair for my own delight, and quite alone. But it was easy enough even for me then to see that Christina Braun loved music for its own sake, and, like most persons who do thus appreciate and love it, she seemed, to ordinary observers, to care about little else.

Apart from all this, however, I had arranged in my own mind that Christina Braun and the carpenter's son were what we used to call "sweet-hearts."

After some time I began to observe that Christina ceased to make one in our mild gatherings in Miss Griffin's drawing-room. Indeed the latter lady and I sometimes had tea *tête-à-tête*—or nearly so, her mother only flitting flightily in and out—and it was dull entertainment for both parties. I would gladly have evaded all such *soirées*, but that I was ashamed or unwilling to desert poor Miss Griffin, and perhaps did not always know what to do with myself or where else to go. The time for sitting alone in contented gloom, and smoking a pipe long evenings through, had not nearly come as yet.

Sometimes a fearful thought crossed my mind. Could it be possible that Christina imagined Miss Griffin and I were lovers, and liked to be left alone? I tried to shut out this alarming idea. I vowed not to go any more to a *tête-à-tête* tea; I even attempted awkwardly to pay a mild attention to Christina herself in the hope of thus repelling suspicion. I invited her to come with me to a concert somewhere—we had not the rules of Belgravia or even Bloomsbury to govern our social relationships there—but Christina refused in so decided a tone as to make my doubts a dead certainty. I began to feel convinced that I had guessed but too well. Christina must suppose me deeply in love with Miss Griffin—perhaps solemnly engaged to her—to Miss Griffin, whose age was so undeniable, and who carried the stigma of old maid branded on her very skirts and ankles!

One evening we three—we three!—walked home together, as usual, but were unusually

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dull and silent. Christina declined entering when we arrived at Miss Griffin's door—this time indeed the invitation being very faintly pressed. I was plucking up heart of grace to make my excuses too, when Miss Griffin cut me short by a look of portentous mystery, and the words, "You really must come in, Mr. Banks; I want to speak to you"—words which, however, were not spoken until just after Christina had nodded her head to us and gone on her way.

I followed Miss Griffin up stairs in perhaps something like an agitated condition of mind. I did not quite know whether under certain circumstances strong-minded ladies not young did not think it allowable to interrogate young men touching the nature of their intentions.

Miss Griffin was any thing but a strong-minded woman, and just now did not seem to have been thinking about me at all. She burst out with her communication all at once.

"Oh, Mr. Banks, I must send Christina Braun" (pronounced, as I have said before, "Brawn") "out of the choir. She must not sing with us any more."

Did I feel relieved to hear that the question was of Christina's rejection, and not of my acceptance? Perhaps so. But I certainly felt much surprised.

"What on earth has she been doing?"

"I am so sorry to hear it; indeed, it's quite put me out; you can't think how much."

"Yes; but what is it?"

"I am afraid she is not a good girl. She sings every night at a singing-house!"

"At a singing-house?"

"Yes; a common low singing-house, Mr. Banks—and I don't see what there is to laugh at—a horrid place, where soldiers and sailors and I don't know what—all sorts of low people, in fact—go in and drink and listen to her. It's been all found out; and Mr. Thirlwall (the clergyman) says he can't have a girl in the choir who sings for soldiers and sailors in a common drinking-house. I don't know what to do about it; and I declare it has put me in such a way, you can't think. Perhaps she is not so bad; and then it's all very well for Mr. Thirlwall to talk, but, my goodness! who is to fill her place, with such a voice as she has, and such an ear for music? But I can't keep her unless she promises never to go there any more."

"Then you have not spoken to her yet about it?"

"No, not yet. I thought I would ask you something about it first. I thought perhaps you could advise me; you, who are a man of business and know something about the world."

"Well, I am sure I don't see much harm in the whole affair, and I think Mr. Thirlwall is a venerable goose. Miss Braun seems a very quiet, respectable sort of girl" (I thought of the carpenter's love-suit, and felt quite a lordly spirit of patronizing pity), "and then what can she do if she's very poor and has no other way of living? The reverend man does not expect her to live on fifteen pounds a year, paid in rather irregular installments?"

"Yes, that is all quite true; and indeed it is just what I said myself to Mr. Thirlwall—only of course I put it more politely—and *he* says it is true too; for he's a just man, Mr. Banks, though you always seem inclined to laugh at him. But what can he do? He has been preaching from the pulpit time after time against those very singing-houses, and how can he have people looking up from their seats in the church, and perhaps some of them recognizing a singer from such a place among the faces in our choir? You know yourself that would never do."

It occurred to me at the moment that perhaps the worshiper who visited the wicked singing-house, and was thereby enabled to recognize one of its performers, would have scarcely a clear right to object to the chorister who sang there. But I saw no use in urging this point to a logical conclusion, and merely suggested that perhaps the place was not so dreadfully bad after all.

"That is what I was just thinking of. I should really like to know something of it. It would never do to give up the poor girl without knowing whether there is any harm in what she is doing. I actually thought of going there myself; I did, really."

"Oh, you can't go, that is quite out of the question; but if you like I'll go, and bring you a faithful report."

"That is what I should like of all things. I can depend upon your judgment. And at all events one ought to know something about the right and wrong of the affair. I believe in law, Mr. Banks, a person is innocent until you can prove her guilty."

"That is considered one of the great principles of British law, Miss Griffin."

"Yes; and I think it's very proper too; and I only wish people would do the same in every thing else as well as law."

It was settled, then, that I was to visit and report on the obnoxious singing-place. I had heard of it once or twice before; and of sundry of its predecessors which had all in succession withered and disappeared. Up to this time I had never been out of my native town, and of course had never been in a singing-saloon. Our town was an unspeakably dull spot. At this time it was not even visited by a railway, and it depended for its sole excitement upon the changing of a regiment in the barracks or the occasional visit of a war-frigate to the harbor. Owing to the social and topographical peculiarities I have already mentioned which divided us, like all Gaul in Cæsar's day, into three parts, any sort of amusement which might be devised for the gratification of the floating population in the lower plateau, was not likely to excite either interest or alarm in the higher regions. Our middle class were little given to revelry. Every window in their quarter was duly shuttered and barred by eleven o'clock,

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and their warmest stimulant was a controversial sermon. But of late there had unquestionably been some stir created by the successful establishment, after many failures, of a famous singing-saloon, modeled after the fashion of metropolitan dissipation. Not a noisy, harmless "free-and-easy," where Snug the joiner and Quince the carpenter might smoke their pipes and be knocked down in turn for their favorite and special song; where Bottom the weaver might deliver his choicest sentiment, and Starveling the tailor might have the formal permission of his wife to remain half an hour later on the Saturday night. This was not the sort of thing that now invaded us. It was a place where professional singers—women too, look you, nearly as bad as dancers, not to say actresses—came and sat on a platform and sang for money. This was then a dreadful innovation. The singing-saloon itself is now well-nigh obsolete. The rising generation hardly knows what it was like. The music-hall with its plate-glass, its paintings, its private boxes, its concerted music, and its Champagne, has banished it; and the audacious novelty of my young days is a forgotten, fogyish old institution now. But this particular place of which I speak was really creating something like a stir among our quiet and respectable burgesses just then. It was established immediately inside the frontier line of our Alsatia; and it is certain that some of our fathers of families had been to visit it, and had talked with quite a dangerous slyness of its attractions, and had made up parties with some of their friends to go and see it again. All this created naturally a considerable fluttering of angry petticoats in domestic circles, and brought severe and direct condemnation from offended pulpits. And so I had heard of the place in question, and had even been making up my mind to visit it before chance sent me there as the special commissioner of Miss Griffin.

The following night I went alone, and had no difficulty in finding the place. Indeed, when you began to descend from the old square, which was the last strong-hold of respectability and middle class, down a steep street with steps breaking its precipitate fall, a street that was the main artery of the lower town, you came almost at once upon the obnoxious saloon. It was in a large public house, occupying a corner where a cross-street ran off, and showing, like Janus, a double front. The place looked cheery enough from the outside. The night was chill and wet; and the bright crimson curtains draping the windows of the upper room where the musical performances were going on, tempted one with visions of ineffable comfort and warmth out of the wintry plash and drizzle of the sodden streets. I went up stairs. There was no payment at the doors, the musical entertainment being supported in the recognized style by indirect taxation levied upon the "orders." I entered the Circean bower. It was but a small and poor imitation of a Strand or Covent Garden Cave of Harmony, but as it had looking-glasses, crimson curtains, velvet cushions, a platform with foot-lights, and an orchestra, it seemed splendid enough in my confused provincial eyes. I gave an order for something in a rather ineffectual attempt at a careless tone, and dropped into the first available seat. There was rather a numerous audience—including, however, only one or two sailors and no soldiers. Most of the company seemed to me to be smart young artisans, mingled with elderly tradesmen of the unpretentious class; and there were a few young assistants from shops, who looked quite swellish in their well-made clothes and gloves. No ladies were there; Miss Griffin would have presented herself in vain. Most of the company were smoking, by which I was innocently surprised to find that the singers were not in the least disconcerted. Of the "audience" a very few were actually listening to the music; the greater number were chatting unconcernedly round their little tables; one or two were asleep. I had, however, listened with the gravest appearance of interest to a sentimental and a comic song before I came to myself sufficiently to observe even this much of the aspect of the place.

When I said there were no women present I meant, of course, among the audience. For when I began to look collectedly around me I saw that there were girls on the platform, and that among them was Christina Braun. She was dressed in white—poor white muslin only; but she seemed to my eyes to be wearing a magnificent costume. Her arms and shoulders were bare, and were both white and plump, and her fleece of light hair fell around her. She presently came on to sing, and she seemed to be a favorite, for she was welcomed by a burst of applause, and most of the company stopped their talk while some demanded silence by tapping their pipe-bowls on the table. Christina sang in clear and strong tones some ballad—not at all a Circean strain, but some good moral-purpose song about universal brotherhood and being kind to our neighbors. She sang it with sweetness and force, but with hardly any indication of feeling, certainly with no gleam of emotion perceptible in her eyes. Being, however, vehemently encored, she chose, as seemed to be expected, a totally different kind of song. It was what we used to call a "nigger melody"—a sort of novelty then, with a refrain about courting down in Tennessee, or Alabama, or some other such place.

I scarcely knew what it was all about; but I soon knew that I had never heard such spirit, such archness, such wild wayward humor, such occasional ebullitions of tender thrilling emotion conveyed in song before. No, never! Night after night had I heard this girl sing her devotional hymns in the clearest tones, vacant of any emotion whatever; but now, as she sang some trumpery little serio-comic love-song, her dark gray eyes gleamed and filled with light; under her shadowy long lashes the eyes some-

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times looked so dark and deep as to seem in startling contrast with her bright fair hair; her voice swelled, soared, sank, shaded itself away into an infinite variety of expression; she gave life and speech to the very rattle of her banjo; she made the ballad utter a thousand emotions which were no more in the words she sang than in the instrument she struck, or the smoky, beery crowd, whose glasses jingled with their noisy and honest acclamations. What a soul of feeling, what a capacity—deep, boundless, daring—a capacity for love and triumph, and passion and sorrow—spoke in the tones of that voice and the flash of that eye! For me, I felt partly as I used to feel when sitting alone and singing, only with how much of a difference! With what a change from dreamy, vague, and fluctuating emotions, idly rolling in like the waves on the windless shore, and the warm, tumultuous, passionate rush of the new tide of love and youth and manhood breaking in upon my life at last! I began life, I began love, with the hearing of that song! I dare say it was poor, coarse, untutored singing; untrained, and even in some sense uncouth, it must have been; commonplace it certainly was not, I know that I heard the singer unnumbered times in the prime of her years and her triumph; and I do not believe I ever recognized her genius more clearly than when I heard her sing that poor little ballad in the public house of the old sea-port. My rapture must upon that occasion find some outlet, and I therefore made instant acquaintance with a dull and elderly man near me: he seemed to me, I don't know why, to look like a saddler.

"Splendid!" I exclaimed, addressing him.

"Yes, pretty tidy," rejoined the dull man; and he looked round for the waiter and knocked his empty glass against the table—a signal for a refilling.

"I know her," I added, confidentially.

"Know who?" asked the dull man.

"Her—the singer."

"Ah!" He did not seem to care whether I knew her or not.

"She's a foreigner," I added, especially proud of knowing a foreigner.

"Ah! I never liked the French—I don't believe in 'em. By what I can make out they ain't good for much."

"But she's not French—she's German."

"Don't like Germans, they're a dirty set. They eat candles, I'm told."

This irrelevant and detestable observation so utterly disgusted me that I withdrew at once from the conversation.

I should much have liked to wait for the close of the entertainment and to speak to Christina; but I feared she might suppose I had come as a spy or tell-tale, so I slunk very much indeed as if I were a spy or tell-tale from my seat, which was near the door, and went down stairs. I did not gain much by my caution and my flight, for, descending rapidly, I ran against some one coming as rapidly up, and I recognized my friend the basso, the bearded young carpenter. We saluted each other, but he did not seem particularly glad to see me, and he ran past without staying to speak a word. I wished I had not met him, for I feared that in the too-probable event of poor Christina's dismissal he might regard me and report me as a spy, and I had an instinctive knowledge that he had come to see her home; and I envied him—nay, already I almost hated him.

Drizzling and dismal as the black skies were, sloppy and slushy as the streets were, I did not hurry home. On the contrary, I turned deliberately away from home, and straggled, like the town, down hill to the water. From the door I had just quitted I could hear the creaking of the spars of ships that tossed and dragged at their anchors, the whistling of the sullen wind through their cordage, the heavy surge of the waves along their sides. A few strides down an oozy lane and I could see the lights at mast-heads, and even discern through the mist and darkness the white tops of the rushing waves. I made my way, stumbling among upturned boats and anchors and chains, down to the very edge of the water. The town was not well-lighted any where; toward the harbor its darkness grew Cimmerian. The inhabitants had all that mysterious objection to seeing their seaward way at night which used to be so common a characteristic of people living in sea-port towns in the years when French treaties were not. Indeed, many of our people would have abolished moonlight if they could, although these very same persons were strangely given to lurking about the shore and staring seaward at extraordinary hours of the night. This night, however, no stealthy figure peered from the strand: I had it all to myself, and I exulted in being alone.

Born as I was within sound of the waves, it has always seemed to me that in any hour of deep emotion I ought to rush to the sea-side and make the noisy water my confidant. This night I felt that I must find the shore, and relieve my new-born passion by mingling its utterances with the roar of the waters. Alone on that strand what strange fooleries I enacted! I stamped up and down the shore, I sang wild snatches of Christina's song, I shouted mad fragments of incoherent melody and semi-articulate words of passion and love. I was mad, and I was happy; this at last was living! All the delight that an explorer may find when he first breaks into a new sea—that a Bedouin may feel when he first mounts an untamed horse—I felt, now that I knew myself to be tossing at last on the waves of passionate love.

Lucky for me that I was alone, and that the night was so dark. Any one seeing my gestures, hearing my cries, must have taken me for a lunatic. I waited on the strand until my emotions had worked off their first vehemence; perhaps I waited too until I thought the entertainment at the singing-saloon must be nearly over. Then I went back to the street whence I had come, and watched the people coming out.

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After the last of the audience had melted away came out a cluster of the performers; among them I could clearly enough distinguish the figure of Christina—I had keen eyes for her form now—and my friend the basso was escorting her home. A strange, fierce pang shot through me. I had learned to feel two new passions in a few short hours—love and jealousy.

CHAPTER III.

A SEA-FIGHT.

I DID not go near Miss Griffin next day. I postponed making any report of my previous night's visitation. What report could I make but that I had been present at a very dull and harmless entertainment? unless I chose to add the truth—that I had come away madly in love with the eyes and the voice of a girl whom I had been in the habit of seeing three or four times a week for months and months, and about whom I never before cared a straw. Mine was certainly not love at first sight, but it had all the suddenness and unreasoning fierceness of that romantic form of the passion. I have not read in books much about such a love as mine, which neither flamed out at the first glimpse of the object, nor grew up with the gradual development of intimacy and appreciation. I was as one who walks in the sun of some tropical climate uninjured and unheeding for days, and whom suddenly, in some unexpecting moment, a flash, sharp as the cleave of a sabre, strikes and cuts down. Yes, my love was like a sunstroke. I do not know how to describe it better.

Of course I went again to the music-house; I went the next night. The company was of the same general character; the singers were the same. The moment I entered I saw that Christina's eyes turned on me, and I blushed like a great girl. Some male singer came on with his dreary comic song, and she disappeared from the platform. Had she gone for the night? What a cruel disappointment! I stared disconsolate and confounded into my beer-glass, and was positively pitying myself for my privation, when one of the waiters, who were perpetually buzzing about the tables to remind any laggard guests of the necessity of renewing their orders, came up to me, and leaning over my shoulder, said,

"Lady wants to speak to you, Sir."

I started.

"Lady!—what lady?"

"Profesh'nal lady, Sir. Behind the platform, Sir. This way, please."

I followed him. I was crimson all over, and did not venture to look up, fearing that the eyes of a whole curious company must be fixed on me. As a matter of fact, I don't suppose any body in the room took the slightest notice. I was trembling with anxiety, hope, fear, surprise, excitement of the most complicated kind. The waiter drew aside a curtain for me, and I entered a small sanded room, or rather a mere space, behind the platform; and I saw Christina there alone. She had her head turned away when I came in; at the sound of my entrance she looked quickly round, and there was an angry light in her deep gray eyes.

Her first words utterly abashed me.

"Why do you come here?" she said, in a voice purposely kept low, and with the foreign accent more strongly perceptible than usual, owing to the kind of excitement under which she spoke. "Why do you come here to watch me and tell bad of me? Have I ever done you any harm?"

"Oh, Christina—Miss Braun, I mean—how can you say such a thing?" and I broke down in mere stammering.

"Have you not come here to watch me—to spy on me?"

"No. I have not, indeed."

"It's a lie!" she exclaimed, so loudly that I involuntarily glanced in the direction of the audience, fearing the words must have been heard. "It's an untruth. I know you were sent here."

"I was not sent here. Miss Griffin asked me to come here; and—"

"And you came!"

She made a triumphant gesture expressive of conviction and scorn. I certainly felt not unlike a detected spy; and I looked, no doubt, very foolish.

"Yes, I came; but I did not come to—to find out any thing bad, or to do you harm. I came to do you good; and Miss Griffin only wanted to do you good."

"Thank you both." She laid a malicious emphasis on the word "both." "I am much obliged to you both. Heart-felt thanks to you both. But I don't want any one to try to do me good."

"I wished to be your friend."

"I have not many friends—I am poor and miserable; and I have an old man to support whom I love and whom I would die for; and you come and find out that I am trying to make a living, and without wrong to any one, or myself, or God, and you tell of me at the church. Go away; it is not like a man. It is not like an Englishman."

"But I swear to you, Miss Braun, that you are wrong and unjust. You don't know me, or you never would speak as you have done. I am utterly incapable of the wretched meanness you think me guilty of. I wish I could say all I feel, but I can't—I can't; and I dare say I look to you like a convicted spy, or an idiot, or something equally abominable."

"You came last night to see if I was here?"

"I did."

"So! You saw that I was here?"

"I did."

"Then was that not enough? Why did you come again to night?"

"I came to hear you sing! Heaven know-

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I came for that and nothing else. It—it delights me. I could not stay away. I will come again and again, unless you bid me not. But do not bid me not to come, for I would rather be dead than not hear you sing."

"Hush," she said, in a low and gentle tone, "they outside may hear us." As I found courage to look up, I saw that her lips were trembling and that her cheeks were crimsoned. Had my burst of sudden eloquence not been interrupted, it would infallibly have ended with a fervent declaration of love then and there. She imposed silence on me by a gesture which had, I thought, as much entreaty as command in it, and then said, "I must go; it is my time to sing. But I believe you; and I was wrong and angry. You don't know what it is to be a poor girl, trying to live honestly, and watched and suspected. I beg you for pardon. Good-night."

She disappeared; and I heard her voice in a moment thrilling from the platform. I, too, came in front again, and found my way back to the seat I had left.

I would have sat the whole entertainment out, but that I hated the idea of meeting the young carpenter and seeing him give his arm to Christina. I waited and waited, every moment dreading to see him make his appearance. Often as I turned toward the platform, her eyes never met mine. At last I made up my mind and left the room. Luck was against me; at the door below I met my rival. This time he did not pass me with a salute. He looked fiercely at me, and his lips quivered with excitement.

"What d'ye come here for?" he asked.

"What's that to you?" was my school-boyish reply. I was not in years much beyond the school-boy age.

"It's this to me—look here, it's this: you come here to watch that girl, and spy upon her, and fetch and carry stories about her, to get her dismissed from the choir; I dare say that's why you come here."

"You are a liar!" was my fierce reply—"an impertinent liar!"

He turned pale; but not at all with fear.

"Do you mean to say," he asked, "that you've not been sent here as a spy on her?"

"I mean to say nothing to you, or any fellow like you, except just what I have said."

"Yes, you can talk in that way *here*," he said, significantly; "but would you say so any where else?"

"Any where you like; and the sooner the better." My pent-up feelings sought any manner of outburst as a relief.

"Come this way, then."

My rival led the way down the oozy, plashy lane I have already described to the strand. It was nearly as dark as the night before: it was quite as lonely. The few twinkling lights at the far mast-heads of anchored vessels alone broke the gloom. Unless we stood pretty close together we could hardly see each other, and my foe strode on so impatiently that I sometimes lost sight of him altogether for a moment, and I was once or twice almost under the necessity of having to raise an undignified halloo. How he managed to get on without stumbling I can not imagine; every other moment my feet were tripping over huge stones or coils of chain, and once I literally fell forward right over an upturned boat. I began to think the whole proceeding rather an absurd one; but I had been grievously insulted, and although now a minion of the law, professionally bound, one would think, to abstain from deeds of violence, yet it must be remembered that I was the son of a boat-builder who had been a sailor in his day, and that not many months ago I was a school-boy. Yet I much wished the duel to come off quickly, and while my blood was up; for I felt the ridiculous features of the business becoming every moment more impressive, and I began to think that an attorney's clerk boxing with a carpenter—a poetic and musical young lover fighting a vulgar rival with fists—would be outrageously absurd, unpicturesque, and unheroic.

At last my pertinacious and thrice-accursed tormentor came to a pause on a clear spot, or what seemed clear.

"Now then," he said, "there's nobody here. What have you got to say? Are you not a spy and a sneak?"

This was too much; and as I had given my answer in words before, I thought a repetition of it would be mere tautology. I was glad, too, to bring my scruples and hesitations to a violent end. I simply hit out, and caught my antagonist fairly on the left eyebrow.

Then began the fight. It was hearty, vigorous, and funny. I don't know whether many of my readers have fought a battle on the seashore at an advanced hour of a dark winter night. The sensations it produces are decidedly odd, tantalizing, and bewildering; but it has its peculiar enjoyment too. At least this battle of mine seemed a positively delightful relief from my previous frame of mind. I very soon found that my antagonist was far stronger than I. He had indeed arms of iron; and he took his punishment with unruffled countenance. The punishment was pretty hard, for he had no gleam whatever of scientific knowledge, and exposed himself constantly to a smart blow on the face. But he seemed to care no more for the blows than if they had been the pepperings of a hail-shower, although, dark as it was, I could see that his face was bleeding in many places. His mode of fighting was an odd and self-acquired process altogether. He never hit straight out, but leveled huge, tremendous, swinging blows at the side of the head, literally leaping off his feet at each stroke, so as to lend it a more furious momentum. I was inclined to laugh at first, but I soon found it was no laughing matter, for the first touch I got of one of these odd blows—and I only got a touch, for I sprang aside in time—nearly knocked all my senses clear away. If he had been prompt to

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follow up his victory, the combat was over there and then! As it was, I felt pretty sure that should I be unlucky enough to come in for the full force and swing of one of those swashing blows, it would be enough for me; and I tried with desperate energy all such resources of science and strength as I had to bring the fight to a conclusion. He bore my hammering as coolly as if he were of iron; and alas! I think he acquired at last a sort of rude notion of stratagem wholly his own. He threw himself quite open in the most tempting fashion to one of my straightforward blows, took it without even shaking his head, and while I was in the very act of giving it, suddenly leaped upright, swung his huge flail of an arm, and crash across the side of my head came all the full fury of his blow. Meteors in a moment danced and sparkled all around me; stars, comets, flashes of lightning blazed upon my eyes; thunders indescribable rattled round my ears and brain; the earth heaved beneath me; the dark sky came crashing down upon me. I seemed as if I were cast loose from all gravitating principle and whirling through space, now head up, now heels up—and at last I came with a cruel bang down to earth again—and then I felt for half a second a soft, sweet, melting sensation of languid rest, like that produced to a bruised man by the bleeding of a vein, and I just heard something like a shriek, and then I was asleep.

The plain practical English of all my sensations was that I had been fairly knocked off my feet by a stunning blow, had fallen with my head crashing against a stone, and had then and there fainted.

When I opened my eyes I saw at first nothing but the stars. I remained feebly contemplating them a moment, as if that were all I had to do in existence. Then I saw some dark object interpose itself between me and the constellation of Orion, and I recognized the face of my conqueror, and I think I endeavored to frown defiance; but the face was in a moment withdrawn. Then I somehow became conscious that a soft hand was passing along my forehead, that a handkerchief, or something of the kind, was pressed gently but firmly on the place where the stone had cut me; and at last I came to understand that I was lying on the beach with my head in a woman's lap.

Unconsciously I spoke half aloud the word "Christina!"

"Oh, thank God!" said Christina's own voice, "he's alive."

"Yes, thank God!" muttered the deep voice of the poor basso; "I didn't mean to do it, Christina—I didn't indeed. I wish he had done it to me."

"For shame!" replied Christina, still in a sort of whisper. "Shame to you—so strong and huge—to fight with him!"

I began now to see things a little clearer; and I scrambled to my feet, still somewhat staggery, perhaps, but quite able to speak up for myself.

"It's no fault of his," I said; "and I'm quite well able to fight him. Look at his face, Miss Braun, and see if he hasn't got the worst of it. And it was all my fault, too."

Christina rose to her feet. "Now, shake hands," she said, "and don't be fools any more."

My antagonist advanced sheepishly, and held out the brawny fist which had proved such a rough play-fellow.

"I—I hope you'll forgive me," he said, with one glance at me and another at Christina. "I was quite wrong altogether; and I know it now, and I'm sorry. I'm sure I don't bear any malice, if you don't; and—and—how do you feel now?"

I assured him, in all sincerity, that I bore no malice whatever; and I likewise affirmed, perhaps not quite so sincerely, that I felt perfectly well—never better in my life. Indeed, I was recovering fast. I had only had a stunning blow and a cut head. At twenty years one soon gets over such trifles as these.

I then learned that when Christina was leaving the singing-room she inquired for her regular escort, and was told that he had gone down toward the strand with me. Something led her to suspect that we had quarreled, and she followed us, but arrived only in time to witness the ignominious fall and utter defeat of one combatant. I ought to have been delighted at my defeat, for it brought such tender interest and anxiety about me; but I was not delighted. The one thing present to my mind all through was that I had been "licked," and that *she* saw it. "Earl Percy sees my fall," is the reflection that lends most bitterness to the fate of the old hero in the ballad. What is the humiliation of a chief before any foe compared with that of a youth who is beaten under the very eyes of the girl he loves? The pity and kindness of Christina were bitter to me.

On the other hand, my rival's victory did not seem to have crowned him with joy. He had a crest-fallen, humbled, spaniel-like demeanor. We both walked home with Christina, who insisted on giving me her arm instead of taking mine, on the ground that I must be far too weak not to need support.

When we reached her door I heard my conqueror say to her in a low tone,

"You are not angry with me any more?"

"No," was the answer, given, I am bound to say, in any thing but a forgiving tone. "Why should I be angry? Good-night."

"Ah, but you are angry. Don't, Christina!"

"Good-night."

He was going away, depressed and silent, when she called him back and held out her hand.

"No, Edward, I am not angry. I was, but I am not any more."

"And may I come for you to-morrow night?"

"If you like."

"If I like!"

He turned away rejoicing.

She held out her hand to me without saying

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"SHAME TO YOU—SO STRONG AND HUGE—TO FIGHT WITH HIM!"

a word. But her eyes met mine: and somehow I went away rejoicing too.

Next day I called upon Miss Griffin. I hardly knew what to say to the good spinster, and was much in hope, as I passed up through the bonnet-shop, that the organist might be not at home. She was in. I went up stairs and knocked at the little drawing-room door. Just then I heard voices inside, and I would have retreated; but it was too late. Miss Griffin's shrill tones were heard:

"Is that Mr. Banks?"

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"Yes, Miss Griffin."

"Come in, Mr. Banks, please."

I entered. Miss Griffin was standing up near her piano, on which she rested one hand, the fingers of which were excitedly playing an imaginary and rapid tune on the walnut. Christina Braun stood in the middle of the room, and looked flushed and angry. My face flushed more deeply than hers at the mere sight of her. Miss Griffin's mamma was playing with a parrot in a corner. Seeing that Christina and Miss Griffin had evidently been engaged in excited colloquy, I made for the mamma, and would have at once pretended to bury myself in conversation with her, but she waved me off with the back of her hand, and with a warning gesture directed toward the two principal personages in the room, as one who should say, "Forbear, young man; something highly important is going forward. Disturb it not by idle words." So I stood transfixed and said nothing, and no one said a word to me.

"There's no use in talking, Christina Braun," Miss Griffin went on; "I can't have you singing any longer in my choir unless you give up that horrid, odious, abominable place. Mr. Thirlwall won't have it; he would not allow me to have any one who sings there."

"What harm is that place?" Christina asked, in a tone half pleading, half angry; "I would not go there if I could help it. I go there, believe it, not for my pleasure. I go there because I must live, and my father must live. You have not a father, Miss Griffin."

Mamma pursed her mouth, raised her eyebrows, lifted her hands, and silently appealed, first to me and then to the parrot, against the boldness of this remark. It seemed positively to insinuate a comparison between Christina's father and the late Mr. Griffin.

"And," added Christina, "they pay me more money than the church can give."

"Oh, Christina!"

"I speak to no one there."

"But you must know it is not a proper place for a girl."

"I do not know that it is not a proper place. Did we not often sing songs—yes, well, and also play waltzes, in the choir when there were not people praying below?"

"Christina, it isn't the singing of the songs, as you know very well; it's the people—the kind of people who go there."

"I do not speak to the people, they do not speak to me, except they who sing as myself."

"Really, Miss Griffin," said I, striking in, "there is no harm whatever in the place, and I think it's quite absurd and ridiculous of Mr. Thirlwall to go on in such a way. He's a regular old idiot, I think, and an ancient humbug too."

"Thank you, Mr. Banks; I am much obliged to you for your kind and respectful way of speaking of our clergyman, and the considerate manner in which you assist me in keeping up the discipline of the choir. For you, Christina, you do not know what may become of you."

"Nothing will become of me, God helping—nothing of harm. And I may as well begin, Miss Griffin. Once I shall go upon the theatre and sing there—"

At this point Miss Griffin seemed to think the discussion had gone quite far enough. She ceased to beat her silent tune upon the piano; but she came round to the front of the instrument, deliberately took off the music-book which stood on the little frame, shut the book up, put down the frame, and then closed the piano with a solemn bang. There was no obvious occasion for this performance. I interpreted it to be a sort of formal and ceremonial act of excommunication.

It seemed, however, to have relieved Miss Griffin's mind of some of its anger. She turned to Christina now with an expression of face rather grieved than severe. The excommunication once fairly done, she seemed stricken with pity for the outcast.

"Well, Christina," she said, "if I am to understand that you will not give up that place—"

"Will not give it up? I can not give it up."

"Then I am very, very sorry; and I would keep you if I could—indeed I would, although perhaps you don't think it now; but I must not do it, for you see, Christina, if you have a father to support, I have a mother, and I can't battle against what people say; and so we must part. I hope you will do well, Christina, wherever you go; only I do hope you will never be tempted to sing in any of those Romanist places, whatever they may offer you; and remember to be a good girl, and never to give up your church."

"The church," said Christina, with a flash of something like scorn crossing her face, "has given me up, I think. But I blame you not at all, Miss Griffin; you were very kind to me always—always."

Poor Miss Griffin was quite dissolved in tears. The very kindliest of mortals, she was in anguish at the part she had to play in the transaction, and still more, I fully believe, at the thought of the awful ruin of all heavenly prospects which she clearly saw impending over one who refused to follow the behests of her clergyman, and who sang nigger-melodies for sailors.

Christina bade Miss Griffin good-by; and both were in tears. Then the outcast walked toward Miss Griffin's mamma and held out her hand. But the mamma's dignity was hurt at the disobedience and disrespect, and she drew back, executed the most formal of bows, and said, "Adieu, Mademoiselle."

Then came my turn. Christina held out her hand to me, and her eyes met mine. I took her hand and pressed it to my lips. A slight shriek from mamma testified to her sense of my scandalous conduct. Miss Griffin was absorbed in tears and did not see it.

Christina left the room, and I hurried after her.

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"Mr. Banks," I heard Miss Griffin call out, "please don't go yet. I want to speak to you particularly—about the choir."

"In five minutes, two minutes, Miss Griffin," was my retreating answer; and I relieved myself by adding, in a lower tone, "the choir may go to the devil."

I overtook Christina at the door.

She abandoned the choir, then and there, never reappearing within its precincts.

And I went that night, and many nights successively, to the condemned and fatal singing-saloon.

In little more than a week a considerable change was brought about in the relations of the personages of this story. There was first a sort of break-down in the arrangements of the choir, and one Sunday the audience had to be content with merely an instrumental performance. Soon a new bass, a new tenor, and a new soprano gladdened the pious ears and hearts of the congregation. For immediately on Christina's abandoning the choir Ned Lambert did what I had felt sure he would do—he gave up his post and sang bass for that congregation no more. I had made up my mind never to go near the place again, once Christina abandoned it; and I was only sorry the sacrifice was not a far greater one (really it was not quite insignificant), that I might have had the proud consciousness of voluntary martyrdom.

The affair created quite a little stir in our microcosm. It was talked of for fully three weeks—at least, three Sundays. I attended church the first Sunday, as unprofessional worshiper, in the hope that Mr. Thirlwall might make some allusion to us in his sermon. But he did not, and I was disappointed. Many eyes were turned on me, however; and people coming out of church and passing me whispered and shrugged their shoulders, and I felt rather proud. The general conclusion of the congregation was that we three—Christina Braun, Edward Lambert, and myself—were simply going to the devil.

CHAPTER IV.

"FAR ABOVE SINGING."

Mr. Braun and his daughter still occupied the house in which the former had endeavored in vain to win the childhood of our town to philosophy and science by the royal road of amusement. Our childhood absolutely refused even toys, if any manner of instruction and moral purpose were to come with them; and therefore, while Mr. Braun still technically occupied the house, his actual occupancy was confined to three small rooms on the second-floor. He had been driven back in this way from stage to stage, his domain growing gradually smaller and smaller, like the Pope's, until even the little Leonine City now left him seemed itself only the final halting-place before absolute surrender of all temporal endowment. The shop was let to a watch-maker; the first-floor was occupied by a hair-dresser; and as one of the plates on the street-door bore the name of "Miss Muncey, milliner," and I sometimes did meet lank and lymphatic young women on the stairs, I had to infer that the third-floor—the garrets, in fact—constituted the work-rooms and show-rooms of Miss Muncey.

The little sitting-room occupied by the Brauns was perhaps as poorly furnished an apartment as any could well be which did not proclaim actual destitution. A few of the poorest cane-chairs, and not more than a few; an arm-chair, covered with the cheapest flowered calico; a central table of deal, with a faded, over-washed cover; these and an infirm sofa made up the principal part of the stock of furniture. There was, however, a piano of good tone—a relic of better days—with which Christina would not part, and which, indeed, was her sole capital and "plant" as a musician. There were always flowers in the room, and botanical specimens carefully pressed and tastefully displayed; there were two or three pretty vases of Bohemian glass; there was Mr. Braun's flute, really a handsome article, with old-fashioned silver keys; there was his pipe, huge, and likewise silver-mounted. These and other stray properties gave an appearance to the room which at least suggested refinement, and something like ornament. And I should not surely omit to mention a beautifully carved and polished book-case, small, but of genuine oak and admirable workmanship; and I knew the moment I saw it whose hand had wrought it, and whose gift it was. "It was given to my father," said Christina to me afterward, "not to me. I would not have taken it, though I know poor Ned would have been vexed by a refusal; and so I am glad he didn't offer it to me."

It was easy to understand, after an evening spent in this little room, why the burden of life had fallen so heavily and so early upon my poor Christina. Her father had entirely given up all idea of struggling any longer with the world, although he was far from being too old for stout and stiff exertion. He was the gentlest and the feeblest being I ever met. He was a small, very small man, with a pale, thin, clearly-marked, handsome face; a benevolent, mild, and placid expression; soft, silky, scanty gray hair; and large, dark, gray-blue eyes. His eyes were precisely like his daughter's, much darker than his complexion would have led you to expect; but there the resemblance ceased. Mr. Braun spoke English admirably; he played the piano and the flute well; he was an accomplished botanist, and knew a good deal about chemistry and astronomy. He talked much of flowers, of stars, of the poetry of nature, of shadows and sunrises, of beautiful and gentle things generally; and of the poets and writers who sang and discoursed of such things. When he was not playing his flute he commonly sat and smoked his pipe, the bowl of which rested on the ground, all the evening through.

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He always rose early, and walked on the hills or by the sea; rose none the less early though he had been out on the strand watching some planet or constellation till long past midnight; and while Christina provided him with the means of living, he repaid her with fresh flowers, and observations on the heavens, and the beauty of life, and the divine purpose in every thing. He was, indeed, a thoroughly impracticable, well-meaning, good-for-nothing, lovable old man. He would have provoked me terribly, I think, if I were his son; but he did not seem to provoke Christina. She appeared to take it as quite a matter of course that her father should smoke his pipe, or botanize, while she toiled to get money and provide dinner, and make the two ends meet. He was always sweet, mild, and happy. He had been blessed, or cursed, with that calm, light nature which can put away trouble or responsibility in a moment, and find enjoyment any where. He had lost wife and children—six children—all of whom he dearly loved; but he lived on tranquil, and spoke of them as having been happily transferred to amaranthine bowers, where they had only to await his coming. What he had himself done to merit that sure translation to immortal bliss I never could learn; but it was clear that his mind was quite made up on that point. So, too, of his daughter. She reverenced in him, as pure and lofty religious feeling, that which I always regarded merely as the physical placidity of a temperament not susceptible of any strong or keen emotion. An innocently selfish, mildly egotistic man, you could not help loving him, and I at least could not help sometimes despising him. While the stars shone, while the flowers bloomed, when the snow covered the ground and the frost made the brambles look like sprays and spars of crystal, he was happy, and could not be otherwise. He could forget hunger in the contemplation of a flower; all humanity in the polishing of a stone. He cared as little for active thought as for active pursuits; and knew less of politics than an American infant generally does. The political agitations, struggles, sufferings, aspirations of his own countrymen, inspired him only with a tranquil scorn. He often asked, with utter contempt in his tone, what it mattered who owned the Rhine, so long as men could see its waters shining as brightly as ever in the sun, and darkening as before in the shadows of the everlasting hills.

"German unity!" he would say, scornfully. "Germany has unity. Has she not Goethe and Novalis and Jean Paul? has she not Fichte? Hapsburg owns not less Kant than Brandenburg; Bavaria can sing the songs of Uhland and Arndt, as well as Suabia. Our unity is in our soul, and our language, and our worship of the beautiful and divine. The rest is nothing —no, nothing at all, or mere smoke and cloud veiling the glow of the heaven, as Faust himself has said."

Mr. Braun never looked one moment beyond the present, and was angry in his mild way with any one who did. He was displeased with Christina for singing of nights in the Cave of Harmony, not because he had any objection to the place, or the company, or the kind of life to which it introduced her; not because it overtasked her, or threatened to wear out her voice, or endangered her in any way; but because she had to leave him for some hours every evening, and he was lonely without her. So he was vexed with her, and chafed in his own small way, and was jealous, as if her leaving him was a willful act of neglect, or indifference to his happiness. He did not concern himself to think who would pay the rent if poor Christina had not always had spirit and sense enough to act for herself. A sort of philosopher, he was perhaps wise in his own conceit of life's theory and purpose; but philosophers of that school ought never to have any children. I have often thought that when Morality blames Rousseau for having abandoned his children to a foundling hospital, it blames him for one of the only wise things he ever did. Better to confide them to the care of any institution, managed by any sane and human creatures, than to keep them under his own melancholy and imbecile charge.

I took lessons in German from Mr. Braun. I really wanted to learn the language, partly for its own sake, and more because it was Christina's native tongue. But of course my chief reason was to have a plausible excuse for coming often to the house. After the lapse of a quarter I paid him some money. He took it passively, and laid it beside him. Christina coming in soon after found the money, made inquiry about it, and gave it back to me. I would have resisted, but she flushed so angrily that I pocketed it without further objection.

"My father knows nothing about money," she said, "and never did. I arrange all that; it is good enough task for women. *He* was made for something much better, and we always liked to spare him. I know he never meant to take any money from you; *you* have lost enough by us already."

For she would insist upon regarding my withdrawal from the choir as a high, mighty, and chivalrous sacrifice.

"You took this in mistake, father?" she said, appealing to him; "you were not thinking; you took it, not observing?"

"*Versteht sich*," he placidly replied, waving away with his hand a cloud of smoke, and solemnly indifferent to the whole business. I said no more, and what future lessons I received were accepted without talk of payment.

I do not know what was the special charm which made me so suddenly fall in love with Christina Braun. Falling in love is indeed the most exact description of what befell me. From a smooth level of calm indifference I literally fell into a glowing deep of love. Nor did this condition seem likely to change. It was impossible for me not to continue loving her. To

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begin with, she was intensely, exuberantly, and above all things, feminine. In every glance and movement she now seemed to my opened eyes to diffuse some vague sense of womanhood all around her. As one is conscious of the presence of flowers which he does not see, as one feels the air surcharged with electricity before the thunder-storm, so I always felt the influence, the sensuous influence if you will, of idealized womanhood when Christina was near. I do not know whether this sort of feeling can be made intelligible in any words of mine, but I can not better describe the sensation of delight, refinement, and romantic love which her mere presence awakened in my soul. As I look back now, all the purple light of youth, all the glamour of poetry, all the bewitching illusions of music, seem to glorify that time when first Christina's presence grew a familiar influence to me.

There was an extraordinary quality of quiet energy in her which amazed me when I came to appreciate it. It was not the energy which fusses and bustles—to most young men a terribly disenchanting and disagreeable quality. It was an energy which made itself silently felt: a great self-sufficing quality. The early necessity of thinking and acting for two, the impossibility of consulting with one who was as useless for consultation as a baby, had doubtless forced this quality into regular action. Christina seemed to be of that class of women who can make something almost out of nothing. For easy and prompt adornment of her graceful figure she had a positive genius. I have often wondered and admired to see what a splendid simulation of imposing concert-costume she could confer upon herself with a little white muslin and a few scraps of ribbon and roses; and she could put on an old shawl in a style that Lady Hamilton might have envied.

I grew into the habit of spending every disengaged hour—and nearly the whole of every Sunday—in the familiar little room over the watch-maker's and under the milliner's. We sang, we played, we read, we recited, we talked German, we had very, very humble and modest suppers; we were immensely sociable, unconstrained, full of sentiment, full of laughter, and happy. Edward Lambert came sometimes and took lessons on the flute from Mr. Braun, for which I know he contrived delicately to make some return in one way or another. A patient, manly creature, he sometimes spent his whole evening at his flute-lesson, while Christina and I talked or sang duets on the nights when she was free. I knew that he loved her, dearly and disinterestedly, without selfishness and without hope. I knew that she regarded him as one might regard a fond and faithful Newfoundland dog. After a while he ceased to come very often, and when he did come he talked chiefly to Mr. Braun.

These were pleasant times, and free. They gave a sort of mild foretaste or breath of the Bohemian life which awaited some of us. Whatever of intellectual culture I have ever had I owe its development to these days and evenings, to that mild old man, to that girl. I learned to read French and Italian and German, and to speak these languages fluently enough, if not always very gracefully and grammatically. Years and years after a Frenchwoman told me I spoke French like a German and not like an Englishman. A more happy, harmless life no youth could well have spent.

Was I very much grieved when Ned Lambert left our little circle and went away to London? This happened when the kind of life, blended of Arcadia and Bohemia, which I have been describing, had lasted nearly a year. Well, I parted from the good fellow with a pang; but I must assuredly have felt relieved when he went away. He was an ambitious young fellow enough; and his ambition was to become something like an artist. Therefore he made up his mind to be an organ-builder; and a chance opened for him through some friends in London, of which he willingly availed himself. I happened just to come in to Mr. Braun's on the day when Lambert was taking his final leave. He was holding in his hand a little purse, a parting keepsake from Christina, and twisting it awkwardly between his fingers.

"When shall we three meet again?" I began, endeavoring to say something pleasant.

"We three?—we four!" interjected Mr. Braun. "I am not to be left out of the prospect. I hope to be at the next meeting too."

"It must be in London, then," murmured poor Ned, disconsolately. "I sha'n't come back here ever again—ever again."

The last time I saw Lambert—not long since—he told me that through all the intervening years he never did return to the old town, and never would.

"In London, then," said I; "for London we are all bound. We are not going to stop in this old place all our lives, while Ned Lambert becomes a great man, and makes a fortune in London."

"I'm not likely to come to much," said Lambert; "and I don't want to make a fortune—now."

I saw tears sparkle in Christina's eyes.

"Good-by, Edward," she said; "but not forever! Oh no, not forever! You have been kinder and better than a brother to me for ever so long; and I shall never, never forget you."

She put her arm over his shoulder, drew him down toward her, and kissed him twice. Then she turned and went abruptly into her own room. Ned Lambert tossed his hand in the air as a kind of silent parting salute to us, and in a moment we heard his rapid steps descending the stairs.

"He is a good lad, Edward Lambert," said Mr. Braun; "a kind, true-hearted boy. He does remind me of some of our German youth, with his large grave face, and his strong hands, and his soft heart. He is fond of Christina;

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and he did ask her to marry him—ach, Gott, yes! and last night again. But she could not love him in that way, Emanuel. She could not love him to marry him, as *you* know." And the kind old man looked at me with beaming, gentle eyes.

Yes; I did know it by this time. I must have been stupidly undeserving of any woman's regard if I had not felt before now that Christina Braun loved me.

CHAPTER V.

DEATH IN ARCADIA.

None of us liked the singing-saloon. Not that there was any thing bad about it except its name; that, in a small country town, was quite enough. In our town it did not much matter whether a man, woman, or institution was really bad or good. The sole question was whether he, she, or it had a bad name. So it had long been our object that Christina should abandon the music-hall, and try to live by teaching singing and the piano. At last we resolved that a day-school should be opened. Yes; Mr. and Miss Braun's school—French, German, and music. We advertised in the local paper—rather a stretch of boldness on our part in those quiet days—and I brought in a copy of the paper that same evening, over which we gazed and laughed a good deal. Young ladies and gentlemen were to be taught; and of course perfectly original plans were to be adopted in the teaching of every thing. A great brass plate was got and engraved with the legend, "Mr. and Miss Braun's School." I crossed the street furtively to look at it, and report as to the effect; and the thing was so far accomplished.

Not many pupils came at first. The story of Christina's nightly performances had of course got abroad, and made mammas feel shy of such an instructress. Gradually, however, a few were got together, all from the humbler ranks of our middle plateau; these brought more; and the terms being moderate, and a good deal taught for the money, things began to look a little more prosperous.

Still, this was clearly not the kind of field which Christina's ambition would have sought. We had often indulged and talked over wild hopes that at some distant period we might sing together, *prima donna* and *primo tenore*, upon some great stage, with half a metropolis for our audience. "I saw Rubini," Mr. Braun would sometimes repeat, "in Italy, when he was your age—*ja wohl*, I knew him too—and he had not a finer voice. No; that had he not." I report this eulogy of my voice without a blush. The tribunal which is proverbially wiser than Voltaire has since decided, very conclusively, that my voice is not quite equal to Rubini's. But at the time the praise was spoken it had some effect upon me other than to make me smile.

In fact it had become gradually understood that the musical and other fortunes of Christina and myself were to be associated in life and for life, whenever fate and favor should allow us to begin the struggle together. We were to make a great name in Florence, in Paris, in London. I need not say that we did not pause to consider whether any difficulties were likely to arise in the way of a pair who began by getting married as a preliminary to seeking their fortune. As to our solitary counselor, he would have seen no objection whatever to any scheme which seemed graceful, disinterested, and somewhat romantic; and even if the scheme had none of these recommendations, he would have become reconciled to it or any thing else in a quarter of an hour. So far, then, the common obstructions to the course of true love did not, in our case, rise to disturb the smoothness of the current. There were only three persons in the world to be consulted, or who cared a straw about the matter, and they were quite in harmony on the subject.

At least we were quite in harmony so far as the love and the main wish of two lives were concerned. But the feelings of Christina and myself did not always flow in the same channel. She was a true-born artist; I never was, except in the merely technical sense, an artist at all. She would have given up a fortune for a lyric success; if I were assured of an easy income, I should no more have thought of becoming a professional singer than of becoming an amateur fireman. Moreover, all her plans and projects now were for splendid success under my leadership. Like all women who have any imagination, she saw her lover as a hero destined to triumph on every field he chose to enter. She always arranged the plan of the future as if we could not fail. I looked forward with a secret dread of failure to every undertaking in which I was likely to bear a part. For all that is talked of man's idle self-conceit, I think an ignoble distrust of our own capabilities is one of the commonest of masculine weaknesses. In my case, indeed, my distrust was well justified in one sense; but it helped, more than any thing else, to spoil some part of my life. Christina really knew what she could do; and she was only waiting for the time to do it. She was quite happy, cooking her father's sausage and lighting his pipe; but all the time she knew herself an embryo *prima donna*, and regarded the musical world as only waiting for her. There were times when I felt something like a pang of pity for her inexperience, and her confident, sanguine nature. I ought rather to have pitied my own inferior courage, miserably inferior endowments, inferior organization altogether. Knowing what she became—knowing what, under brighter auspices, she might have become—it now seems to me the very blindness of affection which made her dream for a moment of placing herself and her career under the guidance and guardianship of one so miserably unworthy.

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I often wondered how, with her ideas and her hopes, she could have endured singing in a vulgar provincial music-hall. I told her as much.

"I would sing any where," she said, "rather than be in debt. Father could do nothing, and I must use every power I have, or he must starve. I would have sung my songs in the streets rather than see him troubled to get bread. So little makes him happy, that it would be a shame if he were to want any thing; and then he is old, and he remains not long, perhaps;" and tears stood in her eyes. "I sang in a concert-saloon in Cologne, a room near the theatre; I wonder if it's there now? I could find it in a moment, if I were there; *we* will go there one day and look at the outside of it; but only the outside, for I hated the place itself. Yes, I sang there when I was a little one—yes, only ten years old."

"But you were not born in Cologne?"

"No, no; much farther away from this—across the Vistula." (She mentioned an old historic Prussian town.) "We only came to Cologne when we were coming to England; and we only came to England to go to America. But father has not the art of getting forward in any thing; and so we remained a whole year in Cologne on our way to England, and now we have been many years in England on our way to America; and I don't suppose we shall ever get there, unless *we* go there some day to visit your brother, Emanuel."

"But we shall visit your birth-place some day, shall we not, dearest?"

"I don't know, Emanuel; I don't like to think of it. I was not happy there—oh, not happy at all, but very miserable; and I do not want ever to see the place any more. It is like a discord, or a broken string, or a harsh note, or something of that kind, coming in to some beautiful delicious piece of music, when I turn from now to then. It was all so dull, and without color, and sad and harsh. My father and brother never could agree." (I should mention that I was aware of one of Mr. Braun's sons being still alive.) "Louis was very harsh to father, and not forbearing. I don't remember what it was all about; but I can guess now that Louis thought—well, I suppose he thought my father had not been very prudent or persevering; but I know he was harsh, and he scolded, and his wife scolded. She was very cold and hard and religious, and she always scolded me. One day, I remember, she told me I had too great an appetite, and ate too much for a little beggar-girl; and I cried half the night through, and then got up and tried to steal away, to drown myself from one of the old bridges. But an old night-watchman found me—I remember him so well; he had a horn and a spear of some kind—and he brought me back; and she beat me, and I so hated her! At last father said he would go away, and I was delighted. I did not care where we went—any where, so that we went away. Louis, indeed, was not bad, for he gave us money to go; and she was not bad either. I think she must have been a good woman, but hard; and then she had children of her own, and we were mere dependents. So I came to sing in Cologne, Emanuel, and then here; and so ends my long, long story."

During the whole of the story, which she told in a dreamy kind of tone, her eyes and lips had marked its incidents with the symphony of deep expression. She lived the old life quite over again, as she thus ran it through for me. I was glad when the story was done, so painful was the emotion it had evidently caused her.

"How happy for me, dearest Christina, that you did not go to America! I only wish I had known you sooner, and were rich for your sake, and you should never have sung in a wretched saloon."

"I sang very badly in the place here lately; but I think it was because the people there knew nothing about singing, and there was no use in trying to sing well."

"You sang only too well for me; you bewildered me. I never heard such singing before—indeed, I never heard *any* singing before, in the true sense."

"Ah, I always sang my best when you were there. I saw you the very first night, and sang for you. I loved you even then, Emanuel, though I thought you came with no good-will to me. Was I not angry and rude? *Ach!* I think I loved you always, before even that night—yes, from the very first."

"And will always, to the very last?" I whispered.

"Always—oh, always—if you remain still what you are, what I believe you to be. And if not, then—"

"*Then*, dearest?"

"Then all my light will go out, Emanuel, and I shall be miserable forever. Oh, if I ever think you do not love me beyond every thing in this world, then I shall hate you—no, I don't believe I ever could hate you; but I shall be wretched, and perhaps make both of us unhappy for our lives. But I think that you will never change; I knew from the very first that you would some time come to love me; and now I know that you will love me always. Ah, how bright life is now!"

Her eyes sparkled in tears. We were alone at this time in the little old room. She seated herself at the piano and sang one of her German hymns with even more than her wonted passion of pathos. I sat listening in the deepening twilight of the calm summer evening, happy—transcendently rapturous and happy.

Those were bright days. I have lingered long over them here, although they sounded but as the overture of my life, and really formed no part of the drama itself. I have lingered over them because they were so happy, and because they were so brief.

How long might we have gone on thus peacefully and happily, content with merely playing the prelude of real existence? When should we have married, and begun the business of

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our life-drama in good earnest? These are speculations which I used to be fond of going over and over in my mind, but which I can hardly expect any body else to follow with interest. I dismiss them here from my pages; but the words I have written may remain, for they will serve to indicate thus early that the drama was never played out as we had prearranged it.

The first discordant note which Fate struck in was the death of Christina's father. The mild old man passed suddenly but very quietly out of life. One evening he complained of having a headache and cold feet. When I came that night a doctor was with him. I remained all night. Whatever malady had seized my poor old friend kept a firm hold. Toward morning he talked a good deal, now in English, now in French, now in German, intelligibly but not coherently, of his early home, his wanderings, his lost wife (whom now he saw in Christina), his family one by one, his flowers. He murmured stray scraps of German poems: "Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh"—those exquisite, mournful, consoling lines which came from Goethe's soul and hung late upon his dying lips; and he whispered now that he was going to learn all the secrets of the Creation; and he repeated faintly two lines from Uhland:

"Da sind die Tage lang genug,
Da sind die Nächte mild."

Toward the end he brightened up into clearer consciousness, and called Christina by her name. I remember with a peculiar pang how he touched Christina's hand and then mine, smiled upon us in the old gentle way, full of trust and serenity, and so died. He looked only a little paler and milder in death than in life.

After this came a long sad interval, sweetened, I must own, to me by the consciousness that my presence and my love must be still more needful to Christina than before.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTINA AND I.

THE same little room, unchanged save for the absence of one of its old inmates, whose flute, pipe, and books stood untouched in their familiar former places. Christina and I were alone. We had been talking long and earnestly. She arose and went to the window, and looked silently and thoughtfully into the soft summer night-air. The breath of an exquisite day still haunted somehow the very pavement of the street below, and seemed to soften the hum and the tread of the people who passed under our window. The stars were faint in the violet sky, from which the light of day had not yet wholly faded.

Christina remained for a while motionless and silent, one hand keeping back her hair, the other arm resting on the side of the open window. This was one of those evenings at the close of summer when the dusk seems to descend suddenly like a veil; and as I looked admiringly and lovingly on her face, turned in profile to me and gazing westward, the roseate light which shone on it suddenly went out, and her cheek seemed pale and melancholy. As the room appeared to darken she looked away from where the light in the west had been, and turned toward me smiling, with a sweet, sad expression, which I see even now.

"Emanuel," she said, "you have made me happy—happy, although we have lost my poor father. I never before knew what it was to feel even an hour's happiness. My life was always cold and hard, and I did not hope for much better on earth. Now I believe in happiness, for I believe in love. Do you know that I tried all I could to love poor Edward Lambert; he was so fond of me, and so good; but I could not. I did my best: I wished and prayed to love him, and I could not. I do not know what would have happened to me but for you. I know I never could have staid with my brother in that place, which would be strange to me now. I think I should have had to find out the old bridge where I was going to drown myself before, and complete the work this time. What would have become of me if I had gone there?"

"What would have become of *me?*" I asked, with something of reproach at least in my voice.

"I don't know. I thought perhaps you would have been as happy without me—but stop, don't scold me—indeed I don't think so now. If I succeeded in the world—"

"And didn't fling yourself from the bridge."

"And didn't fling myself from the bridge—don't laugh at me, that was quite a possibility too—if I didn't drown myself, but lived and succeeded, and made a great noise in the world, and got money, then you should have heard of me, for I would have come to you. If not, then you should never have heard or known any thing more of me. I think that is what I meant to do, if I clearly meant to do any thing. But you have changed all that, Emanuel, and it only remains—"

"It only remains to arrange our plans and to be happy."

"We will think of our plans to-morrow, when we are a little more calm and composed. All this has come on us rather suddenly, and I scarcely slept last night, Emanuel, with thinking of you, and how soon I must leave you. Then, even when I fell asleep at last toward morning, I had such a horrid dream; I dreamt that you yourself, with your own lips, told me calmly I had better go—that we had better separate; and I awoke in misery. But that, thank Heaven! has not come true, and I feel that we are acting the wisest part. Life is not long enough for separation, is it, dearest? and I know my Emanuel will not suffer loss in the end by his sacrifice. I see the future all bright before us—as bright as the sky was just now—

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that is, before the evening's red had faded and the darkness come up."

Sacrifice! My sacrifice apparently was that I consented to be loved as a man does not expect to be loved a second time in this world.

Let me explain the source and meaning of the conversation I have just described.

The death of Christina's father ought, in accordance with ordinary usage and respect for public opinion, to have somewhat changed the manner of our intercourse; but it did not—I still spent every evening with Christina as before. I sat beside her while she made her mourning-dress; I was beside her in the deepest of her affliction, and in its gradual subsidence. When the funeral had been long over, and the clergyman and one or two other friends who came out of mere kindness had ceased to visit her, I came regularly every evening, and sat for hours with her just as before. I can say literally that all the time I did not give to business or to sleep I gave to her. I always left her with reluctance, though the separation was but for a few hours. I always hastened eagerly to her, although only a few hours had passed since our last meeting. We walked together of evenings on the hills and by the sea, and watched the line of light that streamed from the west until it seemed to fade into the waves and the night and the stars came up. I learned from her to know each constellation that lights our northern horizon. Her father had taught her, like himself, to live among the stars and love them. I loved to hear her talk as much as to hear her sing—ay, "far above singing." My whole nature was quickened and purified by hers; it was the old, old story of Cymon and Iphigenia over again.

Of course it must have been dreadfully improper, not to say dangerous, thus to spend long evenings after evenings together and alone. But we never thought it so, and indeed never thought about the matter at all. I know that nothing could have been purer than our love, more innocent than our intercourse. I do not recommend that sort of thing as a rule—I see all the danger of it; I see that the two very best people in the world—and we, good lack, were not even the second-best—might have found reason to repent such heedless self-confidence. But it is certain that we trod the furnace unscathed—nay, that we did not even know we were girt with fire from which ordinary eyes would say there was no escaping. I do not well know what preserved us; perhaps our very unconsciousness of danger, perhaps poetry, perhaps music, perhaps sentimentality, perhaps that generous subtle fire of youthful love which has so little of the animal oil in its composition. I can only say that, when we were driven out of our terrestrial paradise, we had at least no cause to blush, or hang our heads, or cover ourselves, because of shame.

Of course, however, this was not the view of the matter taken by our neighbors. It was not likely that in such a miserable little town, enslaved by the judgment of Mrs. Grundy, conduct like ours could escape gossip and criticism. The people living in the same house with Christina knew of our meetings; pupils of Christina's called occasionally in the evening and found us together; many good-natured persons began to talk about us, of whom, I can say in all sincerity, we had never conversed. This kind of talk must at last reach Christina's ears; and it did.

One evening when I came as usual I was told that she was not at home; and I was much surprised, knowing how few acquaintances she had, and how little she cared to visit any of them. The next evening the same thing occurred. The next day I wrote her a letter asking, somewhat warmly, for an explanation. I received a reply full of love and tenderness, begging of me not to come that evening, but promising to write again. I did not grow jealous, or suspicious, or angry. I knew that Christina's heart lay open to me; but I became alarmed, expectant of some evil news; restless, sad. I think I had from the beginning a foreboding that something disagreeable would reach us from her brother. Immediately on poor Mr. Braun's death Christina had written to her brother, acquainting him with the event, describing exactly and frankly her own position and prospects, and asking simply for any advice he could give. For weeks no answer came; but we were not much surprised. In those days railways did not traverse East Prussia and connect Ostend with St. Petersburg.

At last I received a little note from Christina, written in apparent haste, and asking me to see her that evening. I went at the earliest possible moment. It was the evening with which this chapter opens.

I hurried up stairs, and found her door open. I went in, and saw her alone, kneeling on the floor, and engaged in packing up some clothes, books, and music. She looked up, and there was so sad an expression in her face that I positively started.

"Christina, my dearest," I said, kneeling on the ground beside her, "what on earth has happened? Why do you look so sad—and why would you not see me before?"

"I am going away, Emanuel," she replied, in a very faltering voice.

"Going away! Going where? Away from me? No, that I know you are not."

"Ah, yes; it is quite true. I am going to Reichsberg—I must go!"

"Never! you shall not!"

"I must, indeed. See, Emanuel, here is my brother's letter. Read what he writes."

I took the letter and tried to read it. It was in German, written in a dreadful character, which danced before my eyes maddeningly. After some impatient bungling efforts I thrust it into her hand.

"Read it, Christina," I said; "and let me know the meaning of all this, for Heaven's sake!"

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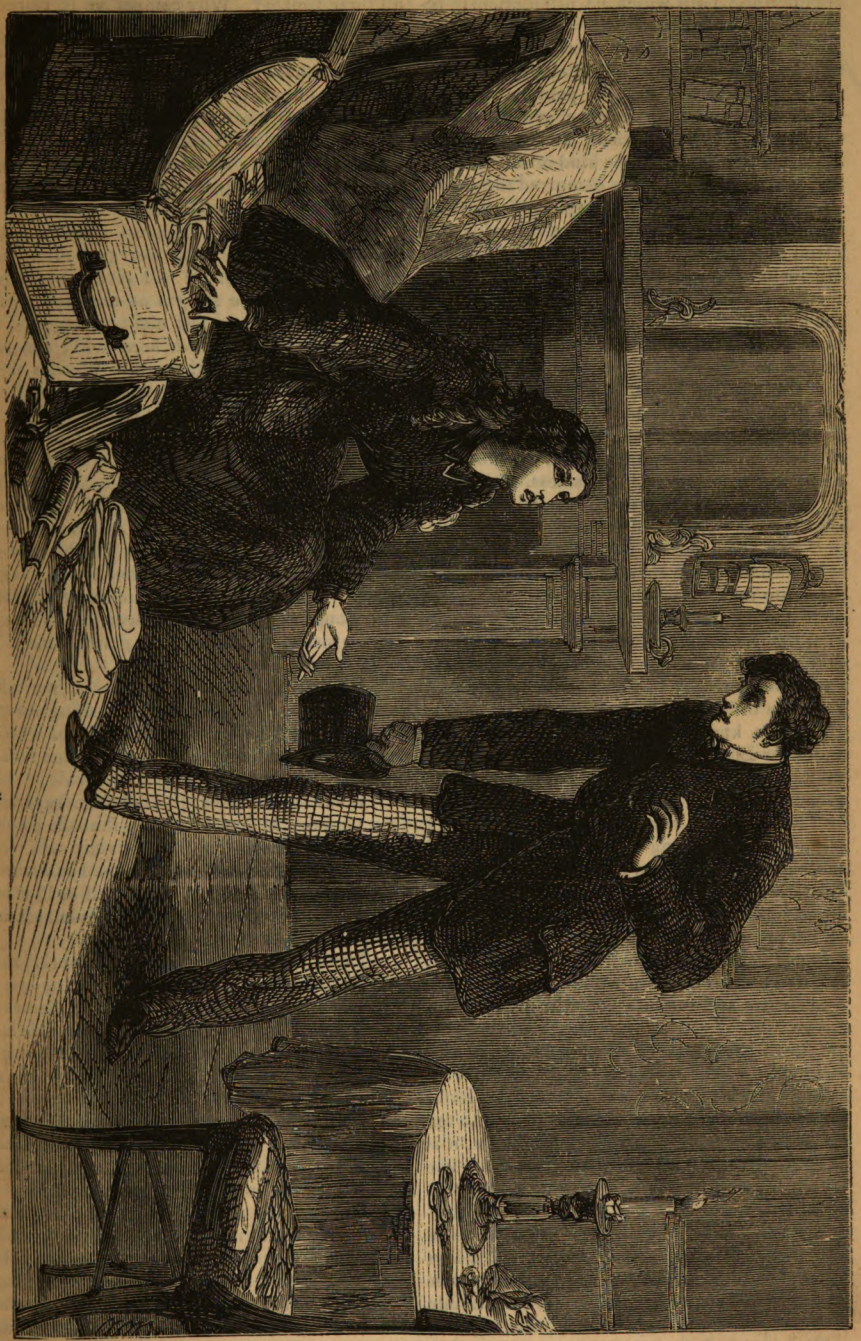

"I AM GOING AWAY, EMANUEL."

She read me the letter. It was long, well-meaning, cold but not unkindly, intensely moral, pious, and philistinish. It expressed well-regulated regret for the death of Mr. Braun, but it made it a duty to allude rather pointedly to his faults and his weaknesses. It showed how these faults and weaknesses had now left the daughter, whom he, the father, so professed to love, homeless and unprovided with any means, at scarcely nineteen years of age, in a far-off foreign country. It expressed a hope that Mr. Braun had found in dying that spiritual

comfort and faith which he ostentatiously rejected during his lifetime.

All this I listened to somewhat impatiently as Christina put into half-intelligible English its long sentences. But the point of the story lay in the concluding passages, and these soon secured my whole attention. Louis Braun disapproved and deplored the kind of life his sister had led as a singer, utterly demurred to her idea of ultimately going on the stage, and enjoined, nay insisted, on her immediately leaving England and placing herself under his protection. He inclosed some abominable Prussian notes for the purpose of assisting her to undertake the journey, which he recommended her to make by way of steamer or sailing vessel from London or Hull to Dantzic.

"It's kind of Louis," Christina stammered out, when she had read to the end. "You see, Emanuel, he has a good heart, and means for the best. I can do nothing else. I must go; and I will help him in his business, and attend to his shop. But I will go on the stage and sing yet one day, for all that."

"You shall not go to him!" I exclaimed. "You shall be the servant of no brother, and attend to no shop. What right has your brother to control you? What has he ever done for you, that he should attempt to order you about in that way? What account of your movements have you to render to him? Leave it to me; *I'll* write to him."

"Louis knows not one word of English; and, dear Emanuel, I don't think your German would be quite certain to explain itself clearly to him."

"Now, I know you don't think of going," I said, warmly clasping her; "you never could smile in that way if you thought of leaving me. Write yourself, then, and tell your brother that he may go—I mean that when you really needed his protection he did not offer it, and that now you don't want it, and will have none of it. No, don't write that—of course you would not—but write and tell him you will not and can not go."

"But what can we do, Emanuel?" she asked, looking up at me with her large eyes, now all sadness and seriousness. "My brother's letter is not all; but my pupils—I did not like to tell you before—are all dropping away. Yes, it is quite true; soon, I fear, I shall have none. The people here talk so much; and now they talk of us, who never did them any harm. Yesterday a lady who had always been my good friend took away her three girls. After the holidays some always do not come back; and this time I shall have very, very few. I met Miss Griffin a week ago, and she spoke very strangely and coldly to me. I do not care about my brother much—I hardly know him at all; but I see that I had better go to him, and even for your sake I must go; and perhaps—oh, perhaps, my own dear Emanuel—we may meet once again."

"Once again! We will never part—never! Why can not we at once put a stop to the talk of all these people? Why can not we be married now—to-morrow? We do not want much to make us happy. Listen, Christina—hear what a salary I have; in a place like this we might live on it forever;" and I whispered its amount—about as much as a fast young Londoner might spend in gloves and cigars.

Christina made no answer. Was she overwhelmed by the largeness of my means, or rendered aghast by their smallness?

"We shall be the happiest people in the world," I urged. "You can give music-lessons, if you like; or we will give concerts together. Why, the singers at that concert in the Assembly Rooms last night were good-for-nothing humbugs, I have been told; and yet people paid to hear them just because they came from London. I am sure no one of them had a voice any thing like yours. We only want to get known. We can't give musical entertainments together now, that's quite clear; but Mr. and Mrs. Emanuel Temple Banks would sound famously, *nicht wahr?*" said I, endeavoring to become jocular. "Or suppose I come out as a blind singer, like Vult, in the story—Richter's story—your poor father read to us so patiently when we were not listening to half of it? Suppose I be a blind singer, and you my wife or sister, sustaining and guiding me? I think it would draw splendidly."

"Nonsense, Emanuel; you must not talk such nonsense," said Christina, smiling nevertheless, though perhaps a watery smile. "We can not be married yet; it would be too rash; and what would people say?"

"What should we care? Let them say what they please. It doesn't appear that the people who concern themselves about us say such very flattering things already that we need court their good opinion. Let them speak well or ill of us—there is a world elsewhere," I exclaimed, in splendid Coriolanus fashion.

"There is, there is indeed, Emanuel!" she said, springing up and with brightening eyes; "there is a world elsewhere, thank Heaven! which is not like this narrow and miserable little place. Oh, who would live here and stagnate, when there are places where life has a chance of success!"

I saw that she was yielding, and I pressed my advantage. I clasped her in my arms, and vowed I would not release her until she had pledged herself never to leave me.

"How could I refuse any longer?" she said at last. "You have prevailed, my own; ah, I am afraid I was only too willing that you should prevail. If you are not unwilling to sacrifice yourself for a poor singing girl, what can she do but accept the sacrifice when she loves you so dearly as I do?"

It was then that she gently withdrew from me for a moment, and went to the window, as we saw her at the opening of this chapter. "Dost thou look at the stars, oh my star?"

We spoke but little of our plans and prospects that night; we were too happy for talk.

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Strange thing in mortal life, we knew we were happy! It is not retrospect alone which throws for me a golden glory round that unforgotten evening; I knew at the hour that a golden atmosphere floated round us both.

Christina had utterly flung away the early doubt and despondency of the evening, and returned to the old joyous self-confidence. She looked at the future with the brightest eyes.

"No chance of our failing, Emanuel," she said, ecstatically.

"And even if we do fail, my dearest," I replied, "what then? We shall be none the less happy. I do not care one rush for any success in life while we can live for each other and be happy. We only value life itself that we may love each other and be happy."

She smiled a triumphant smile. "Have no fear," she said; "we shall have love and happiness and success too. I know we shall; I see the future as clear as to-day. Now, dearest, you must go. I shall see you to-morrow night, shall I not?"

Needless to give my answer—rather, I should say, to describe it. As I was leaving, my eye fell upon the trunk which she had been packing when I came in.

"You may undo your work of packing now, *liebchen*," I said, smilingly.

"Nay, is it worth while?" she asked, smiling with a significance I did not understand. "Remember the world elsewhere."

Need I say how we parted? Need I tell how often I walked backward and forward under her window that night? Need I say that I felt the happiest and the proudest of human creatures? Need I say how I lay awake, and tossed half the night through, recalling every word, every glance, every kiss; how I shaped out plan after plan for our future path of life; how I felt all the passion and the ecstasy, without any of the doubts and feverish fears and torturing pangs, of love?

CHAPTER VII.

THE PATHS DIVIDE.

I HAVE already said that the one thing which gave me any uneasiness as to the future was Christina's passionate desire to go on the stage. This had not, indeed, been a discordant note in our harmony; but it was one I always endeavored not to touch. I kept the question as much as I could out of sight; I compromised with it, made myself believe it would arrange itself somehow. In fact, I was afraid of it, but still kept hoping it would come to nothing; for the more and more I loved Christina, the more and more I wished to keep her wholly to myself, the more jealous I grew of any art, any profession, which could divide her thoughts with me and my love. I could have lived in a desert island with her forever—yes, I still think I could—and never wearied of her, or longed for other companionship. Doubtless to most persons such a profession will seem merely the conscious or unconscious exaggeration of sentiment; doubtless in their case it would be so. I am speaking of myself—of my own heart, and of what I know. I could have lived with her—we two alone—a long life through, and known no weariness or change if she knew none. The first strong emotion of all my life was love for her; and the more I grew to love her, the more jealous I became of the art which she so loved.

I should have been glad to compromise for a life of music-teaching and singing at concerts and oratorios, and such milder and safer paths of the lyric art. Indeed, I had myself had several engagements at local performances of the kind, and was, as I have mentioned already, becoming a sort of small, very small, celebrity. I was saving a little money to begin married life withal, and was very economical and careful, my whole heart being set on one object; nevertheless, the general impression of respectable and good people in our circle still was that I was simply going to the devil.

Now the attorney in whose office I daily worked was a very respectable man. He was a pious man, and sang very loud in church. He was also a very pompous man. He had a very respectable, pious, and pompous wife. He consorted with the rector; he sometimes dined with the local lord; and at the annual flower-show his wife was always taken notice of and politely spoken to by an evangelical countess, and by the wives of the county members.

The very morning after I had made my pact with Christina, I was summoned to my employer's room almost immediately on his reaching the office. When I came into the presence of Mr. Bollington—that was his name—I saw, by the very way in which he settled his neck into his collar, that something was up. I may say that I never liked Mr. Bollington; his manner somehow seemed always to convey to me the idea that he regarded a salaried clerk as simply a poor devil.

"Oh, ah, Mr. Banks," he began. "Yes; I want to speak to you. Close the door. Thank you; that'll do. Mr. Banks, I hear you are getting very much into the way of singing at nights at concerts and oratorios, and all that kind of thing. Now, that is not quite a legal sort of thing, nor quite respectable in our line of business; and I am rather afraid it will tell against us, you know. I am very particular, Mr. Banks, as you know. Law is rather a particular sort of business. People say law is jealous, and won't have any rival, don't they? I think some poet or novelist, or somebody, says something of the kind. I don't think it will do, Mr. Banks; I don't indeed. Law is drier and duller than music; but I think you'll find it better in the long-run."

I was a good deal embarrassed by this address. I had no respect for Mr. Bollington; I knew him to be merely a stupid, respectable old ass; but respectability has somehow an awful sort of halo of divine right yet lingering abou

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it, and it impresses the Bohemian more than he cares to acknowledge. I, an embryo Bohemian, had always to make a little mental struggle to assert myself against this respectable member of society. Now, however, there were other reasons to embarrass me; he seemed actually inspired with a purpose to destroy all my projects.

I stammered out something about being fond of music, and not seeing any harm in such devotion.

"Pardon me; I have not said there was any harm. A taste for music is very respectable; and I am the last man in the world likely to find fault with an inclination which some of the most respectable persons I know, even in my profession, cultivate—in a manner which, in fact, adds to their respectability, I may say. But that is in an amateur way, Mr. Banks; in an amateur way. It is quite different when one comes to be a professional performer; and I hear, Mr. Banks, that you have been going quite into the professional line of late. Now, you have not consulted me on the subject, or ascertained whether I considered such an occupation quite consistent with your position here; and I have therefore found it necessary to send for you, and, in fact, to open the subject myself."

"I really didn't suppose," I said, "that you could have any objection to my improving my income by any means—any honorable means, of course—which did not interfere with my character or my business here. I have not been inattentive to the office."

"Pardon me; I have made no charge of the kind."

"I do not see why one may not have different occupations at different hours of the day."

"In a general way there may be no objection. Many occupations admit of such combination; but we are now speaking of a particular case. This firm, Mr. Banks, has a character for strict attention to business, and business of a peculiar and exclusively respectable kind. I don't say that in a certain kind of low criminal business, for example, there is necessarily any reason why a solicitor should object to his clerk singing at concerts after office-hours. I think it quite possible that such singing and a certain kind of criminal business might combine very well. But ours is not a business of that class, Mr. Banks. Our clients are of quite a different order of life, and they have strong and very proper views on the all-importance of respectability."

"But really, Mr. Bollington"—I had now quite reasserted myself; stupidity had washed all the imposing gilt off respectability, and I could have laughed at or sworn at it—"really, Mr. Bollington, I don't quite see that I am bound to give up every thing to such views."

"Not bound at all, Mr. Banks; certainly not bound. You are not an articled clerk, and are quite free to act as you please. Let the conversation close for the present. Be so good as to think the matter over. I am sure you understand my determination. You can therefore decide for yourself, and let me know, and we can recur to the subject, if necessary, say the day after to-morrow. And now, Mr. Banks, about the papers in the case of Davys and Pontypool, if you please."

This was of course an *ultimatum*. A greater *contretemps* could hardly have occurred. All my plans for the present were based on that very combination of music and law which Mr. Bollington declared to be only possible, if at all, in the case of a very low sort of criminal business. This was a sharp and sudden blow to me; and I had the whole day to bear it before I could pour out my bad news and my feelings to Christina.

Grimly enough I went to her lodgings that evening. I thought the very sky looked gray above me; and Christina's gladsome, confident eyes were a sort of new pang and reproach to me.

"Oh, Emanuel, I am so delighted to hear it!" was the reply with which she broke out when, with a sad face, I had got through my dismal news. "I am delighted from my heart to hear it! Why should you stay in so miserable a place, and be paid a few wretched shillings a week, you who are better than them all; you with your voice—and your talents—for you know I never would care for mere voice? No; you are rid of it all now, and are free. Now you will have to throw your soul into the art you are fitted for, my dear Emanuel. Ill news, dear! This is the best and brightest of news to Christina. I always feared that you would be content to work and wait here, and I have had enough of working and waiting. You are so easily contented—oh, far too easily contented! but only because you are modest of your talents, and do not know what you deserve and what you can be, as I do. No, no; my Emanuel will be no more a slave, but an artist. Tell him so, and be free."

There was something pitiful to me in hearing the enthusiastic girl run on in this wild way.

"Alas, Christina," I said, "it is not so easy to make a great way in the world as you think—you girls, with your vivid imagination and your confidence. You see me with eyes which will guide nobody else. Think how difficult it is to get on in this place."

"In this place! Yes; but who would think of this place? Leave it, my Emanuel! London and Paris—these are the places for us. Why delay here at all? why not go to London at once, and together? why, dearest Emanuel, why?"

Her impatience rose to something like wildness.

"Because, my love," I said, looking as wise and as cheerful as I could contrive to do—"because in London people who have neither money nor friends may have to starve."

"But we have some money. I have saved some; a little—and not so very little. See!"

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And she showed me in triumph a few poor sovereigns heaped up in a drawer, where any body who chanced to enter her room might have found, and, if so inclined, stolen them. I could hardly keep back my tears—I was only a boy, after all; and there was something unspeakably pitiful and touching in the pride and confidence built upon the few poor golden coins.

"My dearest, your money and mine would not keep us long in London. People must endeavor to make a beginning where they have friends."

"Then you are content to give up your career; give up your chance of becoming a great artist—as I know you would be?"

"No, not give up, my own Christina, but just wait only a little for a better chance. Listen, you wild girl; we must give up something—"

"But listen, Emanuel. I have set my very soul on being a great singer, and on your being one too. You may think me a mad creature; but I know that in this I am wiser than you. Don't stop on the way, and don't be afraid. I am not afraid; why should you—a man?"

"You are not afraid," I said, taking both her hands, and trying to pet her into calmness, "because you are a generous, imaginative, darling girl, who, once you love a man, think the world must see him as you do, and that he must turn out something great. I know more of the world, and of myself, than you do. I only ask that we should be patient for the sake of each other. I can not do any thing which might make you unhappy. You may be ready to sacrifice yourself; but don't ask me to sacrifice you."

"Listen, Emanuel," she said, disengaging her hands from mine, and then laying one arm on my shoulder and looking earnestly, imploringly at me (I see her deep dark eyes and eager trembling lips even now this moment); "do not talk of waiting and of patience, and of living a life of dull, stupid plodding in this hateful place. Only last evening you appealed to me—and persuaded me; let me now persuade you. Do you think me bold to speak in this way? Yes, I am bold now, because I love you so, because you are all in the world to me, and I tremble to think of our separation."

"Separation? Who speaks of separation? What could separate us?"

"You do not know; I do not know; any thing, any delay—a night's reflection may change our fortunes, may change our hearts! I tremble to hear you talk as if you only wished to cling to this place forever."

"And I tremble to hear you speak as if ambition, and not love, were your impulse, Christina! Yes, I could be happy with you here, even here, forever!"

"But let us not talk of that. I could not see you condemned to an ignoble, stupid life here; I love you far too deeply. Your ambition is mine; your success would be mine. Oh, Emanuel, love me and my ambition too, or you can not love me, you can not understand me at all!"

"If the choice were between your love and your ambition," I said, sullenly, "I know which would win."

"You can't divide them; they are one and the same. They are as my heart and my soul. Oh, Emanuel, you know I love you. I have no one on earth whom I care for but you."

"And yet if it were a choice between giving up your chance of a career, your dream of a career"—I was now bitterly jealous of her ambition, and spoke in almost savage tones—"you would throw me away without a thought. Do you call that love?"

"No," she replied, vehemently, and turning from me, "I do not. But I loved an ambitious man, a brave man, an artist, and not a slave."

Had she struck me in the face I could not have felt the blow more heavily. A surprised, passionate, injured cry was breaking from my lips. I repressed it with all the force of energy I could call up; but I turned away, and, sitting on the nearest chair, covered my face with my hands.

I do not know how many minutes or seconds I had sat thus. It seemed to me a long interval of bewildered pain and bitterness. I felt at last a hand laid on mine, and a sweet, piteous voice murmured "Emanuel!" I allowed the hand that covered my face to be drawn away; and then I saw that Christina was kneeling at my feet, and looking up at me with eyes full of tears.

"Oh, forgive me!" she exclaimed; "my dear, dear Emanuel, forgive me; I did not know what I was saying."

"You have cruelly misinterpreted me, Christina."

"I have indeed; and that is the second time in our lives I have done so. But I will do so no more. How could I use such cruel, shameful, false words to you! But I was disappointed; oh, so bitterly disappointed! and I was mad."

"Dearest Christina, you know—if you do not, at least Heaven knows—that I only think of your happiness, that I only shrink from exposing you to utter poverty."

"But what else have I suffered from my birth? I am well used to poverty. Ah, if you did but know all! I prefer any poverty, even alone, to going to my brother. Why should I fear it with you? But I will not talk in that way any more; I was foolish and wild; and you were right not to heed my folly. You are calm and have sense, and you know the world."

"You are a true woman, a true heroine," I said, my bitterness wholly melted away by her sweetness and submission, "and you would rather have the courage which springs without counting the consequences than that which calculates and waits. So would I, perhaps, if the consequences only affected myself alone; but a man who has the happiness of the wo-

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man he loves placed in his hands must not plunge headlong with her and himself too. No, my dearest, the courage which endures is often the best. We can wait for our career."

"We must wait indeed, Emanuel; and perhaps a long time. You must have thought me a wild, romantic fool. I am sorry now, for I see that you are right."

"Then I have convinced you?" I asked, joyously, proud of my pitiful and jealous prudence, as if it were any thing but faint-heartedness, suspicion, and folly.

"You *have* convinced me," she said, in a low, sad voice. "Let us not speak of it now any more, Emanuel; at least for to-night. I will sing you something."

She sat down to her piano and sang, and I listened until the dusk deepened into night. We parted with affection; but there was a sadness in her manner which I might have thought ominous. As I stood a moment below her window I heard her still faintly singing, and knew that she was not sitting but moving through the room. I walked slowly away, often looking back; suddenly I heard her window raised, and, turning round, I could see, in the deep purple of a late summer night, the outline of her head and neck dark against the sky. I thought she beckoned to me, and I hurried back.

"Only to say good-by," she said in a whisper; and she seemed strangely fluttered and excited. "I only wanted to say good-by once more, dearest; just good-by."

As she leaned from the window a rose she was wearing in her breast fell at my feet. I took it up and put it to my lips. Some coming footsteps were heard, and she whispered in a very faint, very sad tone the word "*Ade.*" Then she quickly closed the window and drew the curtain, and I could see her no more.

Her voice lingered in my ears as I went slowly home, and was in my dreams all night. I longed for the next night, that I might listen to it again.

So the next day dragged heavily through, and I was impatient of it, of myself, of every thing, feverishly anxious to meet *her* again; haunted fretfully by a fear that I had made myself look mean in her eyes; by a doubt whether, after all, my wisdom had not been folly; by a vague foreboding of disunion between us. I made many mistakes and blunders that day; and Mr. Bollington more than once put up his double eye-glass and looked at me with cold significant scrutiny.

At last the hour came for leaving the office. I was at the door, rejoiced to be free in the evening sunlight, when a small boy, whom I knew well, came up and handed me a letter. The urchin was the youngest son of the poor watch-maker who had the shop over which Christina lived, and he was often bribed with buns, apples, and half-pence to act as letter-carrier between us. So I knew at once what he came for, and I snatched at his letter.

"Oh, but stop," said the young varlet; "is the office closed for the day?"

"Yes, Tom; what of that?"

"And you are home for the day?"

"Yes, yes. Why do you ask questions, you little imp?"

"Because she told me I wasn't to give it to you until you were coming away. I've had it in my pocket ever so long."

So he gave me the letter, and darted down the street, alternately whooping and whistling.

I opened it, and read:

"My Well-beloved, Farewell! I have thought and thought, and I see we must not marry yet. Oh, forgive me, Emanuel, and be not so very sorry or lonely. I think we must not meet for a long time. I am gone away, and you must not think of following me or seeking me; for the Heaven has told me that now I could only be an encumbrance to you, and that if we were married now, you would be sorry one day. I go away that I may some time be able to help you. If ever I can, then we shall meet again, for I will find you and come to you. If not, then far better we meet no more. Either way it will be better, and you will thank me some time, and say Christina had right. I love you still; all the same as ever. Still love me: farewell, and think of me often, as I shall never, never forget you.

"Christina."

This was all. The letter was written in the quaint half-German character and the constrained foreign style which I knew so well. I turned down a dark lane out of the sunny street; the ground seemed to heave under my feet, and black spots danced before my eyes in the sunlight. I was not far from the sea—my old, old confidant; and I hurried to it as if my lost love were to be found by its margin. Staggering, slipping, with dazed eyes and choking throat and bursting heart, I reached the strand, and flung myself down, and read the letter again and again and again. And then I laid my head upon the ring of a rusty anchor, and I broke into a boyish passion and tempest of tears. She had made her choice—and left me! Of the beautiful happy life that had grown up around us, and that seemed destined to live with our lives, there was nothing left me but my memory, my grief, my agony—a few letters, and the flower that last night had fallen from her breast.

From that time I never saw her face for ten long years.

Did I make any effort to recover her? Did I not? All I could learn at her lodgings was simply that she had gone by the London coach, and that she had said she was going to her brother's. I hurried up to London by the very next coach—with what result I need hardly say. Utterly a stranger in the metropolis, my search there was quite thrown away. I could only learn at the coach-office that such a girl had actually traveled to town the day before, and

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that was all any body knew of her. I wasted days in hunting about the docks for Dantzic or Königsberg ships or steamers. I found nothing of her. Then I bethought me that she might have gone to Hull, and I too went to Hull; of course utterly too late to have stopped her even had she gone there. I had made up my mind to follow her, when it occurred to me that perhaps, after all, she had relented and written to me some word of comfort and guidance, and I hurried back to my native town. No letter awaited me, and I resolved at least to try the last chance and follow her to her brother's. I remembered the name of the street in which her brother lived, and it could not be difficult to find the house. Besides, I was now seized with a detestation of our town and all that belonged to it; and it seemed to me that I must leave it or go mad. The thought of living there without her, of toiling there uncheered and unloved, of spending drear evenings alone where I had been so happy, of looking up at the window where she could no longer be seen; all this was simply intolerable to me. I had never entered my old employer's door from the evening when I received Christina's letter. What Mr. Bollington thought of me, or whether he thought about me at all, I cared nothing. I sent no explanation or word of any kind. I had some little money saved; I sold some few poor things, and got a little more money; and I took a passage in a Baltic vessel which was to put in at Dantzic. One fair sweet autumn evening I looked back on the strand where I had read Christina's letter, and watched the white houses of the old town of my childhood, and the hill whereon was my mother's grave, until all sank out of sight, and with them closed the first bright chapter of my life.

The weather changed, and we had a rough, slow, miserable passage. Our wretched heavy old tub was beaten about the North Sea and the Baltic so long that it seemed to me as if life had been actually changed into a perpetual tossing on broken wintry waters. At last we reached Dantzic, and I made my way to Christina's native town—a town of canals and islands, and numberless bridges, and steep, narrow, darkling streets, with whole populations living in each house.

I found Christina's people at last. They received me at first coldly, and even harshly, regarding me as her evil genius; but having at length come to understand that she had renounced me, they lapsed into pity and were kind. But they knew nothing about her—absolutely nothing. She had not come there; she had not written any reply to their last letter. My coming first told them that she had left her old home. My journey had been utterly fruitless and futile.

I took a passage again for England. Sick at heart, and weak in frame, with only two or three sovereigns left, I landed one wet, foggy evening near the Tower of London. As I stepped ashore I said to myself, "Here, then, in London will I stay. I accept battle here. I will succeed here or fail. I will live here, if I can; if not, I do not much care how or how soon I am to die here. Here I shall meet Christina again, or nowhere."

CHAPTER VIII.

FROM ARCADIA TO BOHEMIA.

So I kept my word, and drudged for years in the solitude and darkness of London poverty and struggle. I gave myself up to the teaching of music and to concert-singing, when I could get a decent engagement, or indeed any engagement at all. Understand that mine was for a long time a hard struggle. I lived in a garret—I was familiar with hunger. The details of the first few years may be spared. Stories of struggles in London by rising young men have all a sort of family resemblance; indeed, they are as much alike as Lely's court beauties; and if they sometimes differ in catastrophe—one adventurous career ending in Westminster Abbey, and another in the Lambeth Workhouse—so one court beauty may have died in the purple, and another in the lazar-house. I do not care to weary the reader with a minute account of my struggles for a living; I only ask him to understand that they were real and hard; that for a time they regularly included actual want; that they often meant destitution; that hunger was a common condition; that once or twice I thought it likely enough my fate must be to die of starvation. Let us pass over all this, and come to a time when I began to have a certain income, however small; when I had a few substantial engagements as a teacher of singing and music; and was beginning to think of struggling my way to Italy in the hope of returning thence a qualified candidate for a place on the lyric stage. For on this I had set my heart. Pride, disappointment, baffled love, all conspired to make this seem the necessary task of my life. To prove myself—even were it only to myself—not a failure, not a coward, was a resolution within me strong and tenacious as revenge. It was, indeed, my revenge.

I will not say that the memory of Christina had not somewhat softened, faded into a gentler recollection, during all this time. But its impression was always with me, giving sadness or courage, hope or despondency, as my chances and my mood would have it; always, most certainly, exalting and purifying the mournful monotony of my drudging life by the memory of something beautiful, tender, and distant. For years of my life I was in the habit daily of going up and down the river in the boats, and I became an intense admirer of St. Paul's. I admire that building—forgive me if the confession show stupidity and want of taste—more than Pantheon or Colosseum, than Westminster Abbey or Notre Dame, or Cologne or Antwerp Cathedral, or St. Peter's or St. Sophia's. To look up at it from

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Blackfriar's Bridge on a winter evening, when a cold heaven and a few whitening clouds are behind, and the dome seems a mere flat shape against the sky, a mere form and outline, delighted me. To see it sparkling in the rosy color of a summer morning, with light and shade succeeding each other on its spires and its rounded sides, or rising out of the masses of sunset cloud-heaps like a glimpse of some glorious heaven-city, was a sight still more exquisite. Even when the November fog is around it, and its outlines can only be seen at broken and vague intervals, it is a delight to think that behind that curtain of vapor lie rich spires and domes which one breath of wind might reveal in all their beauty. In whatever season or hour, it seems to me to romanticize and to sanctify the hideous commonplace stretch of roofs and chimneys, and wharves and the leaden Lethean river, on which it looks. So was the memory of Christina, and the presence of my love and even of my disappointment, in my hard and commonplace life.

Sometimes I have deliberately come to one of the bridges in the early morning, and stood in one of the recesses and watched the different phases of beauty the glorious dome would assume in the glowing light and the changing clouds, until perhaps at last the whole air filled with brightness, and every cloud vanished, and the dome and cross were alone in the blue heaven. But these were rare enjoyments. Generally I caught glimpses of my favorite building as I made my way among the bustling crowds on the bridges or on Ludgate Hill, or as I passed beneath in one of the penny steamers. So, too, of my memory of Christina. Sometimes I had an hour or a whole evening to give to my boyish love, and I brought her back before my mind and my eyes until she stood as clear and as life-like before me as when we lived in Arcadia together. But these, too, were rare delights. In ordinary life I only caught mental glimpses of her as I fought my way through vulgar difficulties, and obtained some mean and commonplace advantages. But the influence was there always. I am a believer in beauty and nature and love, and all the rest of it. With a memory like mine, a faint hope, a strong purpose like mine, life could never become wholly vulgar or contemptible. "So long," says the great prose-poet whom Christina's father used to read to us in the old nights, "as the sun keeps but the slenderest rim of its disk uneclipsed the world is not given up to darkness."

All this time, be it understood, my ordinary way of life was very prosaic, poor, and mean. I was now—say seven years or so after my coming to London—only just lifting my head above mere poverty. I was utterly obscure. I was living in a low and swampy district on the Surrey bank of the Thames, in the Putney direction. I lodged there with a poor, respectable, and lady-like old person, whose appearance attracted me when I happened to come that way hunting for cheap and airy apartments. The neighboring population consisted chiefly of brickmakers and market-gardeners. A park having been promised, a few rows of cheap stuccoed houses were built, and christened Albert terraces, Garibaldi villas, Alma places, and such other appropriate and attractive names as the whirligig of time chanced to bring within the easy intellectual range of speculating builders. The roads were damp and undrained, and the whole place looked specially cheerless. The inhabitants of the terraces, villas, and places in no case belonged to the indigenous population, but were of a half-genteel, half-pauper, and wholly nomad class, like ourselves. Many people tried letting lodgings or opening schools there, and failed. One or two persons having privately the care of insane patients, and probably rather anxious to keep them insane, brought them to bide in this dismal swamp. A few government civil officers—Customs, Inland Revenue, etc.—who had not risen in their departments, came and settled there. A forlorn water-color painter, a hopeless photographer, were among our neighbors; in fact, any kind of people who, dreadfully poor, yet would not wholly abandon the appearance of gentility, drifted thither naturally. So long as the villas and cottages were kept in decent repair they looked pleasant enough, and indeed rather fine and imposing. A semi-detached villa, with a vast row of steps and urns at either side, somewhat awed the visitor at first; but the urns were full of dry mud and dead leaves and spiders; the drawing-room was uncarpeted and hardly furnished; a dirty slatternly servant, or a little girl with a torn frock and curl-papers, opened the door; grass and weeds grew upon the sides of the parapets; the only traffic consisted of great coal-wagons going to and from the neighboring railway-stations. The lanes were blocked up with perpetual mud; the frog looked in at the kitchen-window; the maggot and the worm made themselves free of the back-parlor. Here and there small rows of shops had been begun and suddenly stopped, and no one ever seemed to have any idea of completing them. My landlady's daughter called the whole settlement "a refuge for the destitute." It was decaying, but not venerable; it was new, but not fresh; it had all the disadvantages of newness, and all the defects of age. I heard a lady near whom I happened to sit one evening in a river steamer describe it to a companion, when its swampy flats came in sight, as "a deathy place." The phrase was picturesque, effective, and very appropriate. It did look a deathy place; but it had the advantages—to me supreme—of being very cheap, and of having easy access to the river, and therefore to town. In this refuge for the destitute, then, began my march to wealth; in this deathy place opened my struggle for life.

My landlady and her daughter were poor—dreadfully poor. I had seen enough of poverty in my own town, and indeed in my own surroundings, but somehow it was not poverty like

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that of Mrs. Lyndon and her daughter Lilla. Provincial poverty is hardly ever indeed quite the same as London poverty—there is all the difference that exists between a thatched hovel and a Drury Lane garret. But that was not the difference here; Mrs. Lyndon was always clean, neat, and well dressed; and she always seemed to be able to get mutton-chops for her daughter's dinner. The daughter always dressed like a girl accustomed to wear good clothes, and therefore not afraid to be occasionally shabby. She never looked worse than like a lady in dishabille. There was none of the artful neatness, the mournful nervous precision, of conscious poverty about her. What on earth did they live on, that mother and daughter? I had been with them now for a long time; I was constantly being consulted by mother and daughter about their pecuniary affairs. I sometimes counted over the amount which I knew the lodgers to pay, and it still left a pound or two of the house-rent unaccounted for, and the rates and taxes altogether unapproached. Every other day some tax-collector called and left a paper. These documents used to lie in little dusty, sooty piles on the chimney-piece; I do not know that Mrs. Lyndon ever thought about attempting to pay off any of them. I scarcely ever came in at the door without seeing some collector arguing and threatening in vain. I think the dwellers in these neighborhoods used to allow debts of this and other kinds to run up until they reached an insurmountable pile, and then they removed at night to another locality. They were up to all manner of dodges. Sometimes the house was taken in the daughter's name; and this fact enabled the mother, who was always at home, to waive the responsibility away from herself and stave off the collectors a little longer. They seemed ashamed of nothing. Lilla would entertain me sometimes through a whole afternoon's walk with narratives of the straits to which they had been driven, and the success with which they had come through them. You could not contemplate poverty of this sort without an impression that in its meanness and its cynicism it bordered on vice; and yet its endurance, its frankness, its cheerful determination were dashed with the flavor of a kind of virtue. You must pity people so hard up, and you must also feel a certain contempt for them; and yet in my case I could not help liking them, trusting in them, and feeling something resembling affection for them. They were in every sense so kind-hearted, in one sense at least so true; and then we were all so hard up together, that mere necessity and propinquity made us companionable, as people may be who are forced to pass the night beneath the same tree in Hyde Park, or under the same dry arch of the Adelphi.

A girl like Lilla Lyndon was, to my provincial mind, a perfectly wonderful phenomenon. She was extremely pretty, with dark skin and crisp, wavy, dark hair, and bright, laughing, twinkling eyes, and a smile the most confident, sweet, and winning one could well be gladdened by. She had plenty of talk, and she talked in a voice just a little sharp, but with a charming accent; and, in whatever poverty and privation, she had something like the manners of a lady. But these were not the peculiarities which most struck me. I was principally surprised by her inexhaustible knowledge of practical life. How old was she? Hardly twenty, I should think, at the time I am now telling of, and yet she seemed to know London, its ways, its people, its life, its tricks and dodges, high and low, to the very heart. No royal road was that which had led to such learning! Many a hard struggle must have been battled through before such sad practical experience of the world's warfare could be got into that pretty little curly head.

Lilla always dressed with an appearance of fashion. If a new style of bonnet came in, I sometimes found her at night working away at her own old bonnet, and next day it was converted into a very deceptive imitation of the reigning mode. She reconstructed her dresses as often as the British Board of Admiralty reconstruct their war-ships. When crinoline came in she was in the front of the fashion, with petticoats wide enough for a duchess. She was always doing some mending work to stockings and slippers. She was absolutely without hypocrisy or deceit of any kind; even the pardonable feminine deception which keeps ready to hand a piece of crochet-work or bead-ornamentation to be produced the moment a tap at the door announces a visitor, while the real piece of work, the pair of stays or flannel petticoat in process of repair, is hastily thrust under the sofa-cushion. Whatever Lilla Lyndon was doing when you came in, that she kept on doing as unconcernedly as before. You found her darning a stocking, perhaps, and she continued the work—sometimes, it may be, calling your special attention to the frayed and tattered condition of the article. You found her in curl-papers, and she volunteered the admission that she was too lazy to take them out when getting up that morning, or that she wanted her hair to be in particularly good curl that evening—perhaps because her uncle was going to take her somewhere. She was ashamed of nothing that she did. Let me do prompt justice to a clever and pretty girl, and say, to prevent my readers from misjudging her, that she never did any thing to be ashamed of, except talk over creditors, and go in debt when she had no prospect of paying. She was honest in every way except as regarded creditors; and you could as easily have convinced a cat that it is dishonorable to steal cream as induced Lilla Lyndon at this period of her life to believe that the laws of morality have any thing to do with the relations between debtor and creditor.

Lilla's uncle was for some time a mysterious and mythical personage to me. The very first day I became acquainted with mother and daughter I heard of the uncle, who was a mem-

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ber of Parliament, and had an estate in Leicestershire, and who would not do much for them now, but they hoped would do something some day for Lilla. They did not boast of him by any means in the manner of ordinary poor people dragging in a story of a rich relation, but simply referred to him as their one sole possible resource and holdfast in utter emergencies. Gradually I came to hear of the various arts and expedients by which Lilla contrived from time to time to coax or wring a few pounds out of him. Mrs. Lyndon never ventured to go near him. There was a sort of treaty, I fancy, that she was never to intrude on him. I could gather from them that he could never forgive her for having been virtuous, and having thus rendered it necessary for his brother, when he fell in love with her, a poor girl, to marry her. He was now more angry with her than ever because she was poor and lonely, old and shabby. No doubt many of her shifts and schemes and pressing appeals for money often made the relationship seem a very discreditable thing. The mother and daughter had not known him very long. Lilla's childhood had been passed in Heaven knows what poverty and meanness, her mother never daring to apply to the wealthy and offended relative. Lilla herself told me, with some pride and much laughter, how she, being driven to utter desperation one day, determined upon hunting down her uncle, and how she found him out in his great house in Mayfair, and faced the powdered servants, and insisted upon seeing him; how she waited outside the hall-door for two mortal hours, very cold, very hungry, but resolute, and prepared for the encounter by being dressed in whatever finery she had got; how at last she saw him, and was rather gruffly received; how she began to cry, thinking that the proper way to soften a cruel uncle, but was soon undeceived by the cruel uncle telling her sternly that he hated crying women, whereupon she desisted from weeping, the more readily because she had not the least inclination to cry; and how at last she compelled him to admit the relationship, and came away with a permission to call again and a ten-pound note. This present she changed at the nearest shop, and treated herself forthwith to a pair of gloves, a new bonnet, a fowl to be brought home for dinner, and a hansom cab to her own door.

Since then she had never lost sight of him. He must either have begun to accept her existence and her visits as a kind of dispensation not to be any longer resisted, or she must have really succeeded, with her pretty face, genteel figure, and coaxing ways, in making him fond of her. He was a widower, and had daughters of his own; but they would never see Lilla, who, for her own part, was only too happy to escape seeing them; and all her visits, therefore, were paid in the absence of these inflexible ladies. Mr. Lyndon seemed to me, by Lilla's own admission, to have done a good deal for her. He had obtained for her situations as governess in various families in London, in Cheltenham, in Edinburgh, in Bath, in Scarborough; but she always quitted her place somewhat abruptly, and came back to her mother reveling and rejoicing in her freedom, which she celebrated by laying out part of the balance of her salary in a fowl, or oysters, or a lobster, or something nice for supper. Terrible trouble had she each time to make her explanations and excuses to her uncle, and cozen him into forgiving her. From various hints and stray words, I conjectured that she did not get on well with the ladies of any family; and I fancy she had the evil fate, either by intention or innocent inadvertence, to attract a good deal too much of the notice of the husbands, brothers, sons, friends, and male visitors generally, of the houses into which she was successively introduced.

I often marveled that, in a place like London, so quick and clever a girl as Lilla could find no way of converting her energy and ingenuity into money. But practical capacity of this kind she seemed not to have, or not to care about exerting. I began to find, too, that the counsels of her mother did not much tend to make her industrious to any purpose.

"My Lilly is a good girl," poor Mrs. Lyndon would say to me; "a good girl, Mr. Banks, although I say it. She ought to be a lady; and perhaps she will be one day. If I were dead and out of the way, I think, perhaps, they would make her a lady. She isn't fit to lead this kind of life; she's too delicate and too refined; any body can see that. She can't eat the kind of dinners I have to set before her sometimes, poor child."

Lilla was immensely fond of the pastry-cook's shop, and had a taste for lobster-salad as finely developed as ever I saw. There was something unspeakably touching in the manner and tone of the old woman when she spoke of this bouncing London lass, and the sincerity with which she evidently regarded her as too delicate and fragile for the coarse world around.

"She isn't strong like me," the emaciated old creature would say, the tears blinking in her sad and faded eyes. "I was a farmer's daughter, Mr. Banks, passing half my days in the fields and the open air, not like a poor, peaky Londoner. I was a fine, stout, rosy girl at Lilly's age; and long before that I could cook and bake and brew, and put my hand to every thing about the farm. Once we had a great harvest-home dinner, and I cooked a beautiful fawn for the day; and oh, bless you, the praise I got for it! My father called me up to the table, and the farmers all drank my health, and told me I'd make such a splendid farmer's wife. I was that proud, I can tell you; and I didn't expect then to be living in London a poor old woman. But my poor Lilly was brought up in town, and I never had much to give her, dear child; and she can't be expected to look strong and well as country girls do."

Mrs. Lyndon was not a widow. That piece of information had been volunteered to me by

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Lilla. Lilla told me her father had deserted them, and gone abroad somewhere, and had not since been heard of.

Sometimes when I came home late at night I used to find my way down to the kitchen, where the embers of the fire were generally burning, and where I could smoke a pipe with a clear conscience, having no curtains to fumigate and no one to render uncomfortable. One night, as I was going down, I was surprised to see a light below. Thinking the gas had been left burning by mistake, I went down; and when just on the last stair I saw that Mrs. Lyndon was still up. She was seated with her back to me, and leaned over the table. Was she asleep? I stooped forward to see. No; she was awake, and bent over something which she was moving between her hands. Old stories of misers in the depth of lonely night counting their secret stores of gold came whimsically enough to my mind. She had no gold, however; only a decayed old pack of blackened cards spread before her. I softly withdrew; I had seen enough; I had fathomed all the poor, sad little mystery with one involuntary glance. I too was of Arcadia; I too had come up from the country, where superstitions are still a faith, and omens and divinations defy Hamlet's philosophy. I knew at once that Mrs. Lyndon was trying some feeble, sad, sibylline work. Poor old creature, with her early and childish country superstitions still clinging round her, she was sorting the cards to discover in them some tidings of the husband who had deserted her—some hint as to the fortunes of the daughter whom she was breaking her heart to bring up as a lady.

Late that night I heard a hansom cab drive up to the door. I was reading something in my own room, and I looked out of the window. Some one got out of the cab and handed Lilla to the door-step. She was in opera costume—wherever on earth she had got it—and she looked indeed very attractive, and apparently very joyous, as she tripped up the steps. It was an elderly gentleman who accompanied her. I could see his iron-gray hair and rather red face. Lilla opened the door with her latch-key, while he got into the cab and drove off. I could hear him giving directions to the cabman in a peculiarly strident voice. Lilla crept very softly down stairs, where I suppose her mother was still sitting up for her.

Next morning I chanced to meet my young friend.

"Oh, Mr. Banks," she broke out, "I have such a headache!"

"You were dissipating last night," I answered. "That is what comes of late hours."

"How do you know? Did you see me come in?"

"Yes, that I did."

"I am so glad! Did I look well?"

"Charming."

"Did I really? Yes; my uncle took me to the Opera, and gave me the dress and cloak to go in—was not that kind of him?—and it was so delightful!"

"The music? What opera was it?"

"Oh! *Fidelio*. But I didn't care about the music; at least, I mean I didn't care so much about it. I was so happy, and delighted with every thing, and especially myself. I was a lady for a whole night! And we were in the stalls—I love the stalls! I never was there before—and we had supper afterward! And we drove home in a hansom. Now I have a headache; but I don't mind, for it's such a long time since I had a new dress; and I was so happy."

I could not help thinking of the poor old mother in the damp kitchen, spelling over her pack of cards.

Indeed, I could never look at that poor old woman without wondering for what unknown purpose she was ever sent upon earth, in what inscrutable way Heaven would compensate her in some world hereafter for her joyless drudgery here. Not merely was she not happy herself, but, with the kindliest heart, the most unselfish nature in the world, she did not seem to have the power of making any one else happy. What hopeless misfortune had crushed her into beggarly inertness so young I did not know: but so long, at least, as Lilla's memory seemed to go back, the lives of the pair had been one unintermittent, humiliating, demoralizing battle with poverty. Poverty and drudgery appeared to have crushed quite out of Mrs. Lyndon all the feeling of religion which every where but in London seems to cling to the old and the unfortunate. The butcher and baker left her no time to think of heaven. Her one thought was for her daughter: to get the pretty girl enough to eat, to cook tender chops for her, to have little dainties for her breakfast and her supper, to keep her in clothes, to guard her against consumption, to dream of her one day becoming a lady.

As for the daughter, she was simply a kind-hearted, bright, clever little heathen, not surely incapable of conversion and training if any high-minded creature could but take her in hand. Just now no Fayaway, no naked girl of South Sea islands, could be a more thorough pagan than my graceful and pretty friend Lilla Lyndon.

CHAPTER IX.

LILLA WOULD SERVE ME.

MEANWHILE I am free to own that I liked the company of my pretty pagan; indeed it brightened life very much to me. When I was most lonely and unfriended these people had been strangely kind to me, and our common poverty and struggles made us—I was almost about to say unnaturally—certainly unusually familiar and friendly. Of course no young man of my age could ever be wholly indifferent to the company of a pretty and attractive girl; and

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I really grew quite fond of Lilla. I was not in the least in love with her; nor did she, I feel assured, ever think of me in the light of a possible lover; but we were very friendly and familiar, and indeed, in a sort of quiet, confident way, attached to each other. A happy Bohemian independence of public opinion emancipated our movements. She and I generally walked out together on Sundays in the desolate suburbs, or across the swamp which was undergoing slow conversion into a park. Sometimes, as I came home in the evening after giving some music-lessons—or, for that matter, tuning a piano—I met her going toward town, and I turned back and walked with her. Much amazed I used to be at first by her close knowledge of the shortest way to get every where, and of every shop where the best things to eat, or wear, or drink were to be had at the lowest possible prices.

Our talk was generally lively enough; but there were days when I became so saddened by my memories and my dull prospects that I really could not brighten; and then Lilla, in order to encourage me, told me all kinds of stories of her own occasional trials and distresses, as well as of people she had known, who, having been reduced to the very depths of despair, fell in with some lucky fortune, and were raised at once to high position and affluence. Most of those stories, to be sure, were told of young women reduced to serve in shops, whom some men of enormous wealth fell in love with and married; so that I could scarcely derive much encouragement from their application to my own personal condition. But it was easy to see with what a horizon fortune had bounded poor Lilla's earthly ambition. She had no genius for any work that did not directly conduce to personal adornment, and she had a very strong desire for wealth and ease.

"My only chance," she said frankly one day, "is to marry somebody who has money. I am sick of this place and this life. If I married a rich green-grocer even, I should be far, far happier than I am. I should have a home for my mother, and a cart to drive about in on Sundays, when the green-grocer did not want it for his business; and then mother and I would leave him at home on the Sundays to smoke in the back-kitchen while we went out for a drive; and we could call for you and take you with us. I *must* marry somebody with money."

"Suppose, in the mean time, somebody without money comes in the way, and you fall in love with him?"

"Love? Nonsense! Love is a luxury beyond my means, Sir. Besides, do you know, I think debts and poverty make some of us cold-hearted or no-hearted, and we are not capable of falling in love. Seriously, I don't think I could be."

"Then I hope no friend of mine will fall in love with you."

"I am sure I hope not—unless he has money. I don't believe I have such a thing as a heart."

"You ought to have told me all this before, Lilla. How do you know what agony you may be inflicting on my heart?"

I thought she would have laughed at this, but she looked at me quite gravely, and even sympathetically.

"Ah, no!" she said, quietly; "you are safe enough—from me at least; I can see that."

"Why, Miss Lyndon? Pray tell me."

"Don't ask me; but don't think me a fool. Have I not eyes? Can't I see that your heart is gone long ago in some disastrous way or other, and that you can't recover it; and don't you think I am sorry for you? Yes, as much as if you were my brother."

"Ah, Lilla, you have far more heart than you would have me think. Not your eyes saw, but your heart."

And we neither spoke any more on that subject. But I knew that under my pretty pagan's plump bosom there beat a heart which the love of lobster-salad, and the hopes of a rich husband, and all the duty of dodging duns, could not rob of its genial blood-warmth.

Lilla had, like most London girls of her class and temperament, a passion for the theatre. She knew the ways of every theatre, and something about the private lives of all the actors and actresses, and who was married to whom, and who were not married at all, and who was in debt, and who made ever so much money in the year, and spent it or hoarded it, as the case might be. She pointed you out a small cigar-shop, and told you it was kept by the father of Miss Vashner, the great tragic actress; she called your attention to a small coal-and-potato store, and told you it was there Mr. Wagstaffe, the great manager, began his career; she glanced at a beery, snuffy little man in the street, and whispered that he was the husband of the dashing Violet Schönbein, who played the male parts in the burlesques and pantomimes, and whose figure was the admiration of London. Her interest did not lie so much in the stately opera-houses, or even the theatres where legitimate tragedy yet feebly protested its legitimacy and divine right, as in the small pleasant houses where comedians and piquant actresses could always fill the benches. She knew where the best seats were, and how to make use of an order to most advantage; and, indeed, seemed hardly ever to have gone to a theatre except in the company of somebody armed with such a missive. She had been to parties of all kinds—to Kew, to Richmond, to Vauxhall (yes, I think there was a Vauxhall then), to Greenwich, to Dulwich, to Rosherville. She appeared to have an intimate knowledge of all places where supper was to be most comfortably and cheaply had in the neighborhood of each theatre. She had been to the Derby; and she never missed seeing the Queen going to open Parliament, or even the Lord Mayor's Show. She knew all about the great people of London—the Duchess of Sutherland, Lady Palmerston, and the like; and, by some strange process of information, she often used to get to

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know beforehand when grand balls were given in the neighborhood of Belgrave Square or Park Lane, and she loved to go and watch at the doors to see the ladies pass in. Her uncle, she told me, had often promised to take her to the Ladies' Gallery of the House of Commons to hear a debate, but as yet he had not carried out his promise. He took her to the National Gallery and the Royal Academy's Exhibition; but she did not much care about these places of entertainment, and could not tell the name of any picture or painter afterward. Mr. Lyndon, M.P., clearly wanted to impress her with the necessity of some sort of mental culture, for he sent her a new piano and a heap of books, and made her promise to learn. She might have mastered most studies quickly enough had she but shown the same aptitude for them which she had for picking up the private histories of actresses and great ladies, for turning and trimming old dresses, for reviving decayed bonnets, and for stimulating flat porter, by the application of soda, into a ghastly likeness of bottled stout.

I thought her naturally so clever, and indeed I felt such a warm interest in her, that I set to work to teach her something. The piano she played very badly, and that I could teach her; singing I was likewise qualified to instruct her in; and French I spoke fluently enough. These, then, I offered, and in fact was determined, to teach her; and she was very glad to learn, and, when she was in humor for it, very quick and docile. What she went about teaching in the families where she had tried to be governess I never could guess. Just now I was glad she knew so little, and that there were some things I could teach her. I had nothing to do half my time; I was lonely and unfriended; these people had been kind to me, as indeed kindness was a part of their nature, and I felt so grateful that I was only too glad to have any chance of showing my gratitude. So I became Lilla's music-master and French teacher when I could and when she would; and Mrs. Lyndon was delighted. The good woman trusted me entirely. She had so often told me what her dreams and hopes for her daughter were, that she knew so poor a caitiff as myself would never be mean enough to play Marplot by making love to Lilla. We were all poor together, and Mrs. Lyndon felt that hawks would not pick hawks' eyes out.

Little or nothing in this story turns upon my pupil-teaching of Lilla. In a direct sense, nothing came of it. I mention it here only to explain the fact that Lilla and her mother got to think themselves deeply indebted to me, and that Lilla in particular was determined to make me some return.

One evening I was walking rather listlessly along Sloane Street, feigning to myself that I had business in town, when I met Lilla returning homeward. She was all flushed and beaming, evidently under the influence of some piece of splendid good news.

"I have such news for you!" she said. "I have been to my uncle's, and I have talked to him about you."

"About me?"

"Yes. I always wanted to speak to him about you, and I made up my mind to go up specially to-day and do it. I told him all about you; how you were living in our house, and how kind you had always been to mamma and me—which I'm sure we don't forget—whenever we needed it; and Heaven knows we always do need it, for we never yet were able to pay any thing at the right time."

"Well, well, pass over all that, and come back to Mr. Lyndon."

"Yes, I told him all about you, and how you were better than a colony of sons to mamma, and a whole schoolful of brothers to me, and how you teach me this and that—every thing in fact. I can tell you your ears ought to have tingled, for such praise as I gave you mortal man never yet deserved. I told him what a singer you were—ever so much better than Mario, I said; at which I promise you he smiled very grimly, and grumbled out that he had heard of too many singers who were ever so much better than Mario. But I told him that you were, and no mistake. And then I said you wanted to get on the stage, only that you had no friends; at which he smiled again, and said a man who could sing better than Mario didn't much stand in need of friends."

"Well, but, Lilla, I don't quite see."

"Don't you? No, I dare say you don't; but I just do. Why, did I never tell you that my uncle knows all the great swells about the theatres? Oh yes. He once had a share in a theatre with a tremendous swell, Lord Loreine, and he adores operas and singers, and he gives dinners at Greenwich to *prima donnas*. He is constantly behind the scenes every where—odd places for him to go to, I have often told him—and every great singer who comes out he always meets. Who is Reichstein? Is it a man or a woman?"

"Reichstein is a woman."

"Who is she?"

"A singer—a great success in Paris, I'm told. I don't know much about her—hardly any thing, in fact. But she is new in Paris, and I believe a success."

"Well, he has been to Paris—indeed, he only came home last night—and he is in such a state about Reichstein, who is to come out in London and make a wonderful success. I was ashamed to confess that I never heard of Reichstein before, and didn't know, in fact, whether it was a man or a woman; and besides, I told him I wanted to talk about you, and not about Reichstein."

"What did he say?"

"He laughed, and said 'Reichstein could do more for your friend' (*my* friend, you understand) 'than I could.' In fact, he was in such a delightful good-humor that I might have said

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any thing to him to-day. You are to come and see him. Oh yes, you are; you'll find him very friendly."

"But, indeed, Lilla—"

"No, no; I can't hear any modest pleadings. You are to come; I am to bring you. You may be sure he'll like you; and, do you know, I really begin to think your fortune is made. Perhaps you may sing as *primo tenore* with what's-her-name, Reichstein, some time. And I shall go to hear you, and fling a bouquet to you—mind, not to her—so be sure you keep it for yourself; and then you must redeem your promise, and take me to the Derby."

"Hear me swear! You shall accompany me to the Derby. We'll have a carriage and, at least, four horses the very first Derby-day after I have sung as *primo tenore* with Mlle. Reichstein."

"Well, you may laugh now; but I promise you I'll make you keep your word. Far more unlikely things have happened. But now tell me when you are coming to see my uncle."

I had not the remotest idea of presenting myself or being presented to Lilla's uncle. All I had heard of him pictured him to me as a cold, purse-proud, selfish, sensuous man—not, indeed, incapable of doing a generous thing for a poor dependent, but quite incapable of feeling any respect for poverty of any kind. His photograph, which Lilla often showed me, quite confirmed my notions of him. Egotism and pride were traced in every line of the face—of the straight square forehead, of the broad jaw—even the unmistakable sensuousness of the full lips and the wide mouth did not soften the general hardness of the expression. I can not tell why, but I always detested the man. Patronage of any kind I must have hated; but to be patronized by this rich man was utterly out of the question.

Yet I could not but feel grateful for the kindly manner in which poor Lilla had endeavored to serve me. This was surely disinterestedness on her part. She so often had to solicit favors of her uncle upon her own account, that one might have imagined a shrewd and worldly girl would be very careful indeed not to weaken any influence she might have, not to discount any future concessions, by asking his good offices for another. Therefore, while I attached not the slightest importance to the promised influence, and would not have availed myself of it were it really to make my fortune in an hour, I took good care, the reader may well believe, to let Lilla see that I was not ungrateful. Nor did I dash her little pride and triumph by telling her that I would not go to see her uncle. But I temporized; and fortune gave me a ready way of doing it. I had been for some little time in negotiation about an engagement to join a company who were to give concerts in some of the provincial cities and towns; and this very day I had accepted the terms, and duly signed the conditions. I had therefore to leave town at once, and should probably be away for two or three months at the least.

This therefore gave me a satisfactory plea for postponing my visit to Mr. Lyndon.

Lilla was a little cast down; but as she knew I had long been anxious to secure this very engagement—my first of any note—she brightened up immediately, and gave me her warm congratulations.

"When I get back, Lilla, you shall make my fortune."

"How glad I shall be! Do you know that I really hope you may not quite take the provinces by storm, and so find the way made clear to you, without my having any thing to do with it? I do, indeed. I want so much to be the means of doing some good for you."

"You need not fear, Lilla. Fortune will be in no hurry to interfere with your kindly purpose."

"But stop. I *have* actually done something for you already. I have given you a name."

"Indeed! How is that?"

"Well, of course you can't call yourself Banks when you go on the stage. Banks would never do; there couldn't be a great Banks. Then you always say you never would consent to take any ridiculous Italian name."

"Never."

"Well, I have given you a delightful name, which is all your own, by the simplest process in the world. Temple Banks is absolutely ridiculous; people would always keep calling you Temple Bar. Now don't be angry."

"Indeed I am not."

"You got quite flushed when I laughed at your name, though; but no matter. Leave out the Banks altogether, and there you are—Emanuel Temple! What can be prettier and softer? All liquids, positively. Well, I have made you Emanuel Temple, and nothing else. I spoke of you to my uncle as Emanuel Temple. He has written down your name in his memorandum-book as Emanuel Temple. I have launched you as Emanuel Temple, and Emanuel Temple you shall remain."

Nobody much likes any chaff about his name. I did not at first quite relish my young friend's remarks, but I soon saw there was some sense in them. I had indeed, for many reasons, determined on changing my name in some way, and this slight alteration would do as well as any other. So I went through the provinces as Emanuel Temple, and I have never since been publicly known by any other name.

CHAPTER X.

I MAKE A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

Some few weeks of professional wandering among chilling audiences in country towns, meeting with tolerable success in most places, brought me to Dover, and the first glimpse of

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the sea I had enjoyed for years. I felt boyish again at the sight of my old confidant; and the shining track of the moon across the water seemed to mark out a bright path back to the delightful dream-land, the far-off, fading Island of the Blest, with its "light of ineffable faces," whither my boyhood and my first love were banished, the one seemingly as much lost to me as the other. Not for years had I thought so bitterly, so passionately, of Christina as during my short stay in Dover by the sea. And yet she seemed to me almost like a creature in a dream—like some beautiful spirit-love, which had descended upon me while I lay in ecstatic delirium, and faded with my waking. I can almost believe the stories of men who have fallen madly in love with the daughters of dreams, and pined and sickened away their lives in longing after the unreal, and were glad to die, that they might be relieved of the vain tormenting wish.

I pass, however, from recalling these purely personal and egotistical recollections to the subject which I meant to speak of when I recurred to my visit to Dover. An accidental meeting there threw me in the way of making an odd acquaintanceship, which had no little influence afterward on one part at least of my fortunes, and those of two distinct and divided sets of persons, whose histories make indirectly a chapter of mine.

One evening, after I had sung at a concert and been somewhat applauded, I went to have my customary stroll by the sea. I turned into a cigar-shop in one of the steep, stony, narrow little streets, chiefly made up of oyster-shops and public houses, which alone are astir in Dover after nightfall. I asked for a cigar, hardly observing that somebody else was being served with something by the young woman who stood behind the counter.

"Glad *he's* come in!" said a full mellow male voice; "very glad. *He'll* decide; he looks a sort of person who ought to know."

It did not occur to me that this could well have any reference to myself, and so I asked again for a cigar. I noticed then that the girl was flushed in the face, and was biting her lips, half amused and half angry.

"Shall I refer it to him?" said the male voice again.

"I really don't care," replied the girl, "whom you refer it to; I've told you the price and the quality, that's all."

I looked round, and saw that there was seated on a chair at my left a short, stout, well-preserved elderly personage, with black, beady, twinkling eyes, shining white teeth, a rubicund complexion, and a black wig. His opened lips had a full, sensuous expression, and there was a dash of something in his whole face which vaguely spoke of cruelty, or marked eccentricity, or something else that is out of the commonplace character of the everyday Briton. There was an odd, indefinable mixture about his appearance and manner of the broken down gentleman and the artist. I should say that he was probably a naturalized Bohemian—one not born among the gipsies, but who perhaps had strayed into their encampments in early life, or got changed at nurse. His uncommon appearance and queer ways struck me at once. I observed that his hands were small, fat, and beautifully white.

"Then we refer the case to arbitration," complacently remarked this personage; and, still remaining in his chair, he touched his hat very graciously to me, and with a wave of his hand invited my attention. "We have had a dispute, Sir, I and this young lady—her name is Fanny; I address her by her name because we are old acquaintances; I have been here twice, I think—touching the quality of these cigars. She declares them to be prime Havanas, and has the conscience to ask eightpence each. *I* represent them to be rather inferior Veveys, and suggest one penny each, or seven for sixpence. On these terms I am willing to treat for one shilling's worth. I tell her frankly it is no use trying to deceive *me*. I have been to Havana, and I have only just come back from Switzerland; and I remark to her that I rather think I saw the light at least a year or two before she did, and that, generally speaking, I have not knocked about the world for nothing. She refuses to admit the force of these arguments. Fortunately you have come just in time to arbitrate. You seem to me a man who ought to know tobacco from dock-leaves and brown paper. Come, then, how say you—Havana or Vevey?"

"I am afraid I must decline to arbitrate. I have not been to Havana."

"But you are not a Dover man? You don't belong to this confounded dirty, disgraceful little place? Don't tell me."

"No, I am not a Dover man."

"Of course not; I knew it.—You see, Fanny, it's no use trying to deceive me. Take example, sweet girl."

The sweet girl only tossed her head and looked remarkably sour.

"If you're not going to 'ave the cigars," she said, "I just wish you'd put them down, and not bother."

"Fanny, you rush to conclusions with the impetuosity of your sex. It must be something, I fancy, in the nature of petticoats that makes the wearers of them so quick in their conclusions. No, Fanny, I shall not put the cigars down, because I do mean to 'ave them,' as you express it, with the delicious disregard of aspirates peculiar to our common country. I mean to 'have them' and to pay for them, fair being, even at your own price; but I am anxious to convince you that, though you may extort my money—"

"Extort, indeed! I don't care, I'm sure, if you 'ave them or don't 'ave them."

"'Ave them or don't 'ave them.' Innocent accents! As I was observing when I was interrupted—pray don't go, Sir, one moment—I want to convince you that you can not cheat

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"NO, I AM NOT A DOVER MAN."

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me, or confound my sense of justice. You may fret me, but you can not play upon me. I am only for justice. All my life through I have stood up for justice, and I never could get it. The whole world and his wife were against me, may God curse them all!—Look here, Sir!" And he jumped off his seat, and came close up to me, throwing his hat back off his forehead as he did so, and much disarranging his wig meantime. "Have you ever been conspired against, and hated?"

"No, I think not; I don't know at least; and pardon me if I say I don't much care."

"And do you think *I* care. Not I. They have done their best for years, and I have stood out against them, and defied them, and bade them go to the devil; and just because they wouldn't go, and wanted me very particularly not to go either, I did my utmost to go there as fast as possible."

"Which I do believe you're going," muttered the girl, with a glance at me.

"I am a victim, Sir, to my sense of justice, and my determination not to be conquered. I left England when they wanted me to stay here; I come back now because I know they want me away. I'll spoil their game. There are people would rather see all the Beelzebubs and Molochs and Asmodeuses, and the rest of them, than me. Therefore I come. 'Confound their politics; frustrate their knavish tricks!' Good-evening, Sir. Or, stay, are you walking my way, and will you permit me to walk a little with you?"

I was about to decline very firmly the proffered companionship, but a supplicating look from poor Fanny seemed to beg of me to take him out of her way, wheresoever he might then desire to go. So I was pleased to be able to oblige the perplexed lass, who seemed half talked to death already; and it really did not much matter to me whether I endured my new acquaintance's company for a few minutes longer or got rid of him at once. So I expressed myself as quite delighted to have the pleasure of his company, and I was thanked by a glance of gratitude from under Fanny's eyelids.

"Good-night, then, Fanny. Farewell, a long farewell, my Fanny; perchance I may revisit thee no more. I take these six—Havanas we'll call them—at your own valuation. This gentleman and I are too much pressed for time to enter on the business of an arbitration now; and besides, I don't think I could trust him—for he is young, Fanny, and inexperienced—to arbitrate between me and so pretty a girl as yourself. Between man and man is easy arbitration, Fanny; but between man and woman is trying work. Six cigars at eightpence each; six times eight, forty-eight—four shillings. The roof does not fall in, Fanny! I perceive that the Powers above have no intention of interfering to punish or prevent fraud; and I have only to pay. There are the four shillings. Farewell, Fanny; repent, and remember me!—Now, then, Sir, at your service."

I followed my whimsical acquaintance. I observed that all his clothes were of foreign cut and fashion, and looked rather decaying. Indeed, he might have been taken for a shabby old Frenchman who had once been in good society, but for his voice and accent. These were unmistakably English. His voice was peculiarly sweet, full, and mellow, and its natural intonation when he dropped the manner of roistering buffoonery, which seemed to me purposely put on, was decidedly that of an educated English gentleman.

"That's a pretty little devil," remarked my friend as we emerged from a dark street suddenly into the moonlight of the quay.

"The girl in the shop?"

"As if you didn't know at once whom I meant! Of course the girl in the shop—I dare say you'll be found dropping in upon her again."

"Not likely at all."

"Lord, Lord, how this world is given to lying! Don't be offended, Sir; I have only been quoting Jack Falstaff."

"I know, and I am not offended."

"Thanks; I begin to think you are rather a good sort of fellow in your way, and I only offend people I don't like. But you know very well, you sly rogue, you'll be looking in upon little Fanny again. I saw telegraphic glances passing between you."

"I don't care one rush ever to see her again, and I don't mean to."

"How odd! They tell me young fellows in England are greatly changed since my time. Apparently so. When I was your age I should have liked to see such a girl more than once. Even now, I can assure you, I am a martyr, a positive martyr, to my general affection for the petticoat. But look there! God! how can a man talk of petticoats, and such fribbles and *frou-frou*, when he has a sight like that before him?"

He pointed to the sea. We had reached a part of the road from which you looked, on the one hand, at the grand old castle and the white cliffs; on the other, out across the waves, whereon the soft moonlight of late summer seemed floating. The muffled, gentle thunder of the waters rolling languidly and heavily on the strand was in our ears; the scent of the salt sea in our nostrils; the summer air all around us; the moon and the sea before our eyes. It was indeed a scene to refine even vulgarity, to solemnize frivolity.

My friend took off his hat, and stood gazing on the sea. Presently I heard him murmur, in his deep soft tones:

"For I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth."

He presently turned to me:

"Do you think it will avail a man hereafter to plead that he has loved the beauty of His house?"

"Surely, surely; at least I hope so."

"Then you are an artist." This was said in

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the tone of one who has suddenly made a gratifying discovery.

"Well, a sort of artist; at least not wholly without some kind of artistic taste."

"You believe in beauty, don't you? Now, don't give me any vague commonplace answer—I hate cant and parroting of any kind. If you don't believe in it, or if you don't quite know what I mean when I ask you the question, then say you don't, and let there be an end of it. A man may be a devilish good fellow although he has no more soul for beauty than that rock yonder; and let me tell you a man may be a devilish bad fellow, and guilty of pretty well every sin that ever came in his way, although he is open at every pore to the contagion of beauty wherever it shows itself, in a wave or a moonbeam or a woman's bosom. The thing is, do you believe in beauty? Because, if not, we had better walk on, and talk about oysters and cigars."

I never was fluent with confessions of faith on the spur of the moment; and I was not quite clear about the perfect sanity of my companion. However, I answered quite truly that I thought I might describe myself as, in his sense, a believer in beauty.

"Good—we are companions. Now, then, let us look at that scene for a little, and, like a good fellow, don't keep talking all the while." (I had not uttered six sentences thus far during our walk.) "Such a sight must be enjoyed in silence. It is holy; yes, damn me, but it is."

After this pious affirmation he relapsed into silence—only, however, for a few minutes.

"I have been an artist," he said; "at least I tried to paint pictures. I think they were very good, but they didn't come to any thing; in fact, with me nothing comes to any thing. I was brought up to be a gentleman, and that didn't prosper much with me. I've been a ballad-singer—fact! give you my word on it. I've sung in London squares, outside the windows of houses where I've many a time dined; and they've sent out the confounded flunky to tell me to move on. True, every word of it!" And he burst into a loud peal of laughter which waked the echoes of the cliffs, and sounded like a startling, hideous profanity of the stillness and the scene.

"The singing did not prosper?" I asked, calmly, not out of any particular curiosity, but to interpose any question which might check his dissonant mirth.

"Not it! Nothing, I have told you already, ever does prosper with me; and yet they can't get rid of me, I can tell you."

"*They?*"

"Yes, they. What is it to you who they are, or what their accursed names are?"

"I assure you, I don't want to know at all."

"They? I'll tell you who *they* are. The Pharisees, the publicans, the respectable hypocrites, the cold, confounded, bloodless, sinless devils. Look here, and answer me truly—did you ever do a virtuous action?"

"Really, that depends—"

"No, it doesn't; it depends on nothing. Did you ever do any thing that was really virtuous and self-denying, that you would much rather not have done, but did because virtuous people asked you to do it? Any thing of that sort have you ever done?"

"Well, if you press me for an answer, I must say I don't believe I ever did."

"Of course you never did. Well, I did once! You'll not catch me doing such a thing again, I can tell you; it played the devil with me. I've done—and I had done before that—about every foolish and bad thing a man could do; but I might have been forgiven every thing except the one sacrifice to virtue. And it was *such* a sacrifice! If you only knew! No matter. Are you leaving Dover soon?"

"In a day or two."

"Going over, no doubt?"

He nodded in the direction where the French coast lay, now, of course, wholly lost to sight.

"No. I am going to visit a few towns here in the south."

"And then?"

"Then to London."

"Where you live?"

"Where I live."

"Good. I am going to live there too—unless I happen to starve there—for a while. I have a few coins left. I should think a week of very rigid economy would play them out, and Heaven knows into what company of thieves I may fall meantime."

Something prompted me to say, with more emphasis than if the words were merely formal, "I hope we may meet in London."

He laughed a short laugh.

"Well," he said, "*I* hope so too; but if, as the final result of our meeting, you are particularly glad of the acquaintance, I think you'll be about the first that ever had occasion to express such a sentiment. And yet I love mankind; and I really don't try to do harm to any body, except to some very, very near and dear relatives.—I suppose London stands where it did, and is much the same as usual?"

"Just as it was so long as I can remember it."

"I thought so. All the young men wise, and all the young women virtuous. All the marriages made in heaven, and all husbands devoted to their wives. All brothers, of course, living together in love and harmony. A blessed place! Naturally just the place for me: so I am going there. I have not been there for years; but I am glad to hear that its beatific condition remains still unaltered."

He snapped his fingers, and turned abruptly away from me. Just as I thought I had got rid of him, however, he wheeled round and came sharply up to me again.

"Do you know any body in London?" he asked.

"Very few people. In your sense I should perhaps say nobody."

"Any members of parliament, for example?"

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"Not one."

"Ah, that's a pity! Some of them are such noble fellows; *I* know some of them. I know one in particular, and I am very fond of him. His name is Tommy Goodboy. An odd name, isn't it? But it's his name. Don't look in Dod when you get home for Tommy Goodboy, Esq., M.P., because he doesn't give his real name when he goes to the House of Commons. But he's Tommy Goodboy. You remember the story of Tommy and Harry? Harry didn't care; and so a roaring lion came and ate him up. That was convenient for the good people, the respectable and well-behaved people. The deuce of the thing would have been if Harry didn't get eaten, but came back all alive, and kept tormenting Tommy out of his wretched, pitiful existence, disgracing him, crouching at his door like Lazarus, and offending the guests whom Tommy invited to dinner.—By-the-way, I take it for granted you are hard up?"

"Well, I certainly am not Dives. No beggar would care to wait at my door."

"No, I thought not. You dress well enough; but there is something unmistakable about the cut of the man who is hard up. 'Poor devil' is written in every line of *you*; and yet I should say you are a sort of fellow who will burst out of all that and get on. Unlike me in that respect; *I* am a poor devil, and I never shall get on. Good-night. I dare say we shall meet again somewhere. I am going back to the town. I know a very pleasant place where oysters are eaten, and brandy is drunk, and songs are sung; and I am a sort of king of the feast there. They are all low scoundrels, and I'm a kind of lord and patron among them. I don't suppose it's any use asking *you* to come."

"Thanks, no; not the slightest."

"No, you don't seem just the sort of person to enliven a convivial gathering. I know what's the matter with you. Don't be cast down, man; you and she will meet again yet."

His idle words did, I suppose, make me give a slight start; for he laughed his chuckling, rolling laugh, and said:

"So I have touched you! I thought as much. Confound it, man! you're as fortunate as one of Virgil's rustics, if you only knew your own good luck. The best thing that can happen to you is never to see her again; and to keep up your poetry, and romance, and despair, and all the rest of the nonsense. Take my word for it, if you have the misfortune to marry her, you'll soon find the poetry and the romance sponged out, and you'll be glad to join me at the oysters and the brandy! Despairing lover, I envy you from my soul! By God, I do! I would give the crown of England, if I had it, to be young like you, and to be disappointed in love. It's glorious! Confound it, you've made me so envious that I'll leave you with a parting malediction. May the devil inspire her to marry you!"

He burst into his laugh again, and trotted away at last townward. I was glad to get rid of him; indeed, for the last few minutes of the conversation I was plagued by a strong desire to kick him—a performance hardly practicable, seeing that he was old enough to be my father, and only half my size. Yet it was strange with what interest I had been studying his face, his voice, his gestures all the time that he was speaking. I felt perfectly satisfied that I had never seen him before, and yet there was something tormentingly, tantalizingly familiar to me in his features. It was some shadowy, quick-darting resemblance which every now and then seemed just on the point of revealing itself, but always vanished at the most critical moment. As one tortures himself in trying to recall a name which is every instant on the tip of the tongue and yet will not come out, so I perplexed myself in vain endeavors to read the riddle of his face and voice. Strangely, too, it seemed to remind me, as well as I could understand my own sensations, not of one, but of two faces I had somewhere seen. The upper part of the face, the bright twinkling eyes, the straight short nose, the cheek-bones just a little high, the white forehead—these were features which reminded me of something that brought with it genial and kindly associations; while the sensuous lips and cruel jaw recalled something which was harsh and displeasing to remember. I racked my brain again and again; and indeed I think that I dreamed of the creature half through the night, and thought I saw him turning before my eyes into the successive resemblances of nearly every man I knew. But I awoke in the morning with the riddle still unexplained, and at last I resolutely put it aside altogether.

CHAPTER XI.

MY NEW FRIEND IN A NEW CHARACTER.

That night we gave another concert; it was well attended, and successful. When I came on to take part in a duet with some woman I naturally looked round the hall, and to my mingled amusement and vexation I saw my friend of the previous night seated in the reserved part of the hall, and listening with his head a little to one side, and all the manner of a professed connoisseur. He beat time gently with his fingers; he nodded his head and smiled a sweet approving smile when some passage was specially well executed; his brows contracted and he shook his head in indignant remonstrance at any thing out of time or tune. To do him justice, he really did seem to know something about the music, which hardly any body else among the audience did. Therefore he took quite a leading part in the reserved seats, looked blandly but commandingly around, and intimated with eye or gesture where applause might properly be awarded; frowned fiercely down any untimely burst coming in at a wrong place; shrugged his shoulders and shuddered when a breath of wholly unmerited

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approval floated past him; cried *bravo* to a singer, *brava* to a songstress, *bravi* when more than one performer conquered his approval; expressed in audible tones his final verdict on each performance; and, in short, conducted himself quite as one whose judgment artists and audience had alike agreed to recognize. Whether he remembered me or not I could not guess, for his face gave no token of recognition. But when I came on, I observed that he took, with an air of gracious friendliness, the programme from the lap of a lady who sat next him, and raising a double eye-glass which he wore, looked down the bill apparently to discover my name. He was very patronizing in his treatment of me; only shrugged his shoulders once or twice, and several times tapped his palms together and cried "bravo!" Indeed, I think he encouraged, at all events he permitted, an *encore* of one of my ballads. He showed to most advantage, however, during the second part of the concert, which was made up of selections from an oratorio. Impressed strongly by his manner, and apparently anxious to do some act of homage to so accomplished a critic, the lady next him offered to allow him to read from the score of the oratorio she had with her. His manner of surprised, amused, pitying, condescending rejection of the proffered kindness was sublime. The shrug of the shoulders, the raising of the eyebrows, the graceful, lordly waving of the disclaiming hand, the bend of the head, the benign, superior smile, all said as plainly as words could have spoken it: "My dear Madame, do you really suppose there is one note, one half-note of this music that is not familiar to me as the letters of the alphabet? A thousand thanks for your well-meant offer; but pardon me if I say that it really *does* amuse me."

When I was leaving the hall at the end of the performance I caught another glimpse of my friend. He was making himself painfully attentive to two ladies, perhaps those who had sat next to him, by insisting on opening their carriage-door for them, handing them in, arranging their skirts, and otherwise playing the gallant, much to their apparent vexation. He then shut the carriage-door, took off his hat and bowed profoundly, and in a loud tone gave the coachman his order for "home." I watched him for a while with considerable amusement. He then stood on the pavement and scrutinized the crowd coming out. A lady and gentleman came out, talking together in French. The sound struck my friend's ears; he at once approached them, took off his hat, made a bow, and addressed them in a voluble stream of French, accompanying his words with such gestures and shrugs and elevation of eyebrows, that he seemed to have transformed himself into a very Frenchman all in a moment. I do not know whether he was really passing himself off as a Frenchman, but the persons he addressed stopped and conversed with him for a moment or two, then seemed to be puzzled by him, then evidently became anxious to shake him off, finally nodded a good-humored, peremptory adieu, and literally broke away from him. Whereupon my friend first stamped on the pavement, muttered something about *canaille*, then swore a round Saxon oath or two, then burst into a loud laugh, and went laughing and stamping down the street.

I passed him quite closely. He did not observe me; at least he took no notice whatever of me. He was talking to himself.

"The society of the just declines to have me this night," I heard him say. "I have given it the chance, once, twice. The stuck-up Britoness scorns my attentions, confound her! I wish she was Boadicea, and I one of the Roman conquerors, furnished with a good birchen rod. Neither will the frog-eating, fantastic fribble of France invite me to sup with himself and his wife. Afraid to run such a risk with her, no doubt. I don't wonder. I can't sit at good men's feasts to-night. No help for it. There are worse things than bad men's feasts, that's one comfort."

I did not care to give him the chance of fastening on me, whether he chose to regard me as of the good or of the bad; so I hurried away, and so far I escaped.

I walked and smoked a good deal by the seaside that night, and enjoyed the solitude and the beauty of the place. In a very few days I was to return to London, after an absence that had now spread over some months—my first absence, even for a week, since I had come to live in the great city. I thought of Lilla and her good-natured undertaking to make my fortune through her uncle's influence, and wondered how I should be able to get rid of the offer without wounding her, or seeming ungrateful for her kindness. If I could only spread out my provincial engagement for even a fortnight or three weeks longer, the season would be over by the time I had returned to town, and Mr. Lyndon would probably have betaken himself to Ems, or Baden, or Florence, and the difficulty would be obviated for another season at least.

I could not think of such things without meditating rather sadly over my own dreary life and blank future, and then falling into the old, old track of thought about my lost Christina, who had so literally disappeared out of my life. Strange, that in wandering about London I had never met even Ned Lambert, our quondam bass-singer; who might perhaps have told me something of her—whose face would at least have recalled more vividly the associations of the dear, fading days of long ago. Poor Ned Lambert! he must have suffered much. But, good Heavens, what could his sufferings have been to mine! He at least was not first raised up to happiness and then flung down to despair; while I—O Heaven, how happy I was once!

Of late I found myself growing quite moody and moping. I began to think I was getting prematurely old, and to look out of mornings for gray hairs—at eight-and-twenty!

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I turned away from the sea-shore, and walked homeward through the town. Passing through one of the streets I heard noise, clamor, shouting, cursing, stamping—apparently going on in a low public house, the light from whose windows was the only bright spot along that side of the street. As I came up to the place its swing-doors were suddenly flung open, and the "row" streamed out upon the pavement. It assumed the form of a little crowd of men hustling and rushing round some central figures. There were shouts of "Give it him!" "Let 'im 'ave it!" "No!" "Shame!" "Don't hit him!" "Knock him down!" "Damnation Frenchman!" "Dirty foreigner!" "Call the police!" and so forth. I could see that the fat, bare-headed landlord, and the almost equally fat bar-man, were wildly endeavoring to restore order, or keep the whole company out, while the bar-maid stood at the door and vainly screamed for the "Perlice!"

I do not feel much interest in "rows," and would gladly have passed on, but the "row" broke around me, so to speak, split into waves upon the sudden and unexpected opposition of my advancing form, and I found myself somehow in the very midst of it. Then I saw that the central figures were a big, stout, lubberly-looking cavalry soldier, and a small man, who was clinging to the hero's neck. In the latter figure I at once recognized my fantastic friend of the black wig. He was jabbering away in a jargon of French and broken English, and was clinging to his antagonist like a savage little bull-dog. Just as I was rushing in to endeavor to get him away the big soldier succeeded in shaking himself free from my friend's grip, and then took the little man bodily off his feet, and flung him on the pavement, amidst a yelling chorus of cheers and laughter, broken by a few cries of "Shame!"

"For shame, you cowardly ruffian!" I exclaimed, utterly ignorant as I was of the merits of the quarrel. "Don't you see he is an old man? Fight your match, you blackguard, if you want to fight!"

I fully expected to have had to accept a practical challenge on my own account, and stood therefore quite ready, the first moment the soldier made an attack on me, to hit hard and home. He was a floundering, awkward sort of fellow. I was stout and sinewy at that time, and had some little science. I did not despair of finishing off the battle in a well-employed minute or so.

But to do the honest warrior justice, he seemed rather ashamed of his part in the transaction.

"Who wants to fight him?" he asked in a growling tone, and with a sheepish expression. "He ain't that old neither; but I didn't want to have any thing to do with the dirty little Frenchy. 'Twas all his work. Why didn't he let me alone? Why did he keep badgerin' of me, and worryin' of me, and insultin' of me and my red coat, all the evening?"

There was a chorus of approbation, and the bar-man cried, "Hear, hear!"

Meanwhile my little friend jumped to his feet again, and began to dance around us on the pavement without hat or wig, presenting so outrageously ridiculous a spectacle that I could not wonder at the roar of laughter with which he was greeted. I kept between him and the soldier as well as I could, and I at last seized him fast round the arms, while he, endeavoring to break away and get at his antagonist, dragged and whirled me round on the pavement in a manner the most grotesque and ludicrous.

"Let him come!" roared the absurd little beast, in his ridiculous jabber. "*Cochon d'un Anglais!* God dam John Bull! Poltroon of *militaire!* I am not so old, *moi*, but I can teach *ce gros militaire* his own *boxe*. Coward English! English dam! Fight you all round! *Sacré-é-é-é!*"

The absurdity and whimsicality of the whole scene, and of this ridiculous little being's nonsensical part in it, were altogether too much for me, and I too joined in the burst of laughter.

"Come, come," I said at last, shaking my old friend rather roughly by the collar, "don't make a fool of yourself any more. You have had enough of this for one night. Come away with me."

"Will ze *gros militaire* make apology?"

A renewed burst of laughter followed this, in which the *gros militaire* himself joined.

"Do take him away, like a good gentleman," said the landlord to me. "I do think he's the most worriting little creature as ever I saw. He's been insulting every one in my bar to-night. He kissed my bar-maid, and he wanted to kiss my wife; and he's been so down upon that there soldier as flesh and blood wouldn't stand it, telling him the English soldiers were all cowards, and that the French were coming over to thrash us all and carry off our wives. And I tried to get rid of him quietly, and he wouldn't go, and I tried to keep order; but you know it's hard for Englishmen to stand being insulted by a d—d little Frenchman; and the soldier didn't hit him at all, but only wanted just to put him out of the place."

"Well, take all these people in again, and I'll get him out of this.—No, you sha'n't." This last assurance was given to my impetuous friend, who was plunging and struggling so that it sometimes took all the vigor of my eight-and-twenty years to keep him back, and indeed I sometimes felt tempted to let him rush on and get smothered or set upon by the cavalryman. The crowd, however, seeing that the fun was probably over, began to straggle back, laughing, into the public house; the bar-man and the bar-maid had returned to their duties; the soldier was only too glad to get out of the whole business; and I was nearly master of the situation.

"Here's his hat," said the landlord.

"And here's his wig!" exclaimed a by-stander, with a burst of laughter.

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The soldier having by this time disappeared behind the swing-doors of the public house, his antagonist allowed himself to be quietly *coiffé;* and having shrugged his shoulders several times, and exclaimed that the *chasseur* acknowledged himself *vaincu*, he made a low bow to the few remaining spectators, thanked *ces braves Anglais* for the fair play of the *boxe*, and, leaning on my arm affectionately, consented to be led away. The disgust I felt at the whole business no words can express. But that I looked at his withered face, and saw the deepening ruts of Time's track so plainly in it, I should have regretted that I had not left the soldier and himself to settle the business between them.

When we had got a few paces from the scene of conflict my companion burst into a long peal of rolling laughter.

"That was capital," he chuckled. "Did you ever see such fun? I suppose I may drop the Frenchman now, and return to my allegiance as a native-born subject of happy and glorious, long to reign over us, Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland."

"What on earth led you to carry on all that absurd buffoonery?"

"If I know, may I be condemned to the eternal society of British respectability! Give you my word, my dear young friend—whose name I have not yet the honor of knowing—I can no more tell you why I chose to assume the manners, prejudices, and lingo of Albion's hereditary enemy than I could solve the mystery of man's hereafter. What then? We are all creatures of impulse. I have been especially so from the date of my first misfortune—of course I mean my birth. I looked into that atrocious den there with no object whatever. I might have come harmlessly away in five minutes, when the evil destinies would have it that my wandering eyes fell upon that hapless soldier. He was the centre of an admiring bumpkin or costermonger group; he was telling, I think, his adventures—atrocious lies, of course, every one—in China, or the Khyber Pass, or Syria, or some other place; and he was evidently immensely proud of being a British soldier. May I perish if I could resist the temptation to make him and the rest of them uncomfortable! The one thing I hate in life is smug and sleek respectability and self-conceit, in any sphere whatever. In that moment I became a Frenchman—positively for the time being I was a Frenchman. I soon disturbed the harmony of the festive hour. I confuted my red-coat with impromptu facts and impossible geography. I bewildered him so far that before long he couldn't have told whether he did or did not take part in the battle of Plassy, and whether Marshal Ney did not lick the English there. I contradicted and chaffed him, every word he said; I kissed the bar-maid because he seemed spoony about her; I winked ostentatiously at the landlord's wife, until mine host grew purple with jealousy and fear—I really believe I kissed her too; and finally—"

"Finally, they kicked you out."

"No, they didn't. The soldier tried to put me out and couldn't, and then the whole of them fell on me somehow; and I have no doubt they would all have wreaked their base vengeance on me but that you came gallantly up to the rescue. I owe you something for that. So much the worse for you. The people I owe any thing to are seldom any the better for it. Yet I like you; I did from the first. You look so confoundedly out of sorts."

"Thank you."

"Yes, you do. I hate success and respectability. I hate virtue, and domestic happiness, and the proprieties, and all that revolting stuff. I detest children and wives, and people who parade their chubby, insolent happiness. Stand there—just there—in the moonlight a little, and let me look at you."

I complied with his wish. He planted me as a painter might his model, fell back to a proper distance, and steadily surveyed me with his piercing, glittering, small black eyes.

"Yes, that will do," he said, reflectively. "Nothing about you to offend me. You don't seem to me to have tasted much success in life, or to be particularly happy. You, I should say, are at odds with the world, and likely to be for a time at least, and then, perhaps, you may come out all right; and if you do, I don't want to see any more of you from that time forth. Did you ever hear of Swift and his *sæva indignatio*, which could only leave him with his life?"

"Yes, I *have* heard of Swift, and know all about his *sæva indignatio*."

"Well, I think that's my curse. I writhe under it, and I live to make others writhe. That one resemblance—you need not tell me it is the only one—I bear to Jonathan Swift. How the devil, though, do you know it is the only one?"

"I didn't say I knew any thing about it. You may be twice as great a man as Swift for aught I know to the contrary."

"Of course I may—to be sure I may. Then why did you sneer when I spoke of a resemblance between Swift and myself?"

"I didn't sneer. I smiled at the notion."

"Don't smile any more until you know what you are smiling at. However, I don't mind being frank and humble for once, and confessing that in the matter of genius I am decidedly inferior to Swift. Also that the world has never recognized me as it did him. But one thing is certain: Swift never locked up in his heart a greater treasure of hate than I do. How old are you?"

"Twenty-eight, I think, or thereabouts."

"Don't you find the world a devilish place?"

"How devilish?"

"Full of devils. Here, there, and every where—devils all around us. If I were inclined to be an atheist—which, thank God, I never, never was—I should be forced to believe in God because I see so much of the devil. Don't you think with me?"

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"Oh yes, quite so; no doubt. In fact, I am rather in a hurry now, and can't stay to discuss theology."

"Another sneer! This time an inexcusable one, for it is a sneer against religion. Young man, whatever you do, be religious always."

I was turning away, utterly disgusted at the hideous profanation of his language. He saw disgust painted on my features, and he seized me by the arm:

"Stay; don't go yet. Don't—you sha'n't. You think me a hypocrite?"

"I do; and I am sickened by such talk. Let me go, and good-night."

"No; just listen to me. I am not a hypocrite; no, by God! *He* hears me, and He knows! If I had been, I must have succeeded in life, and been respectable, and had carriages and fine horses, and sat in Parliament as Tommy Goodboy. But I could not; I would go my own way—to the devil if need be—and yet loving religion all the time. What else is my hope and my consolation? Do I not read in the Psalms of David how he curses his enemies?—and these words teach *me* how to curse mine. Do I not read how Dives at last went down to hell—"

"For shame, for shame! You are growing old, and should read the Holy Scriptures to some other purpose, or not at all. Let us say no more of it—and good-night."

"Good-night, then—and go to the devil. I say, shall we meet in London?"

"I hope not."

"Then I hope we shall—and I am sure we shall; I see it in the future that we are to be thrown together a good deal somehow."

Confound it! This very thought was at the moment pressing painfully on my own mind. Just as I still kept thinking his face not unfamiliar to me, and wondering where I could have seen one like it before, so I began now to be weighed down with a hideous foreboding that this creature and I were likely to be brought together in some close and disagreeable way hereafter. The very nourishing of this thought drew with it a hesitation which unconsciously checked my abrupt breaking away from my companion. Involuntarily, irresistibly, I once more set myself to scan and study his features, in the vague hope of reading there some clew to my forebodings.

"I see you don't like the prospect," he remarked, with a chuckle; "but *you* need not much fear: you have no money, I know. Lucky for you, for I must get money somehow; and I am *such* a hand at billiards and cards! But I can't wait for these slow and steady acquisitions when I get to London. I must have something to open the campaign with. *Gare* to Goodboy! Good-by to you for the present; we'll meet again. Just now take your face hence. Thanks for defending me so valiantly. Next time that, in the capacity of a discharged *caporal*, I am engaged in vindicating the honor of France against some gigantic beef-eating Briton, I'll endeavor to have *you* close at hand."

At last he went away; and I could hear him trolling *Partant pour la Syrie* in a wonderfully sweet and mellow voice as he disappeared from my sight.

Much relieved by our separation, I went briskly home; sincerely, though somehow not very hopefully, praying that London might prove kind enough to hold us two without bringing us together.

CHAPTER XII.

GREETING AND—FAREWELL.

THE season was fading when I returned to London. Even in our dull and barbarous district people were beginning to make ghastly affectation of going out of town; while in the streets which society and civilization claimed for their own the windows were darkening one after another, much as the colored lamps of an old-fashioned illumination, before the universal reign of gas had set in, used to fade and die toward morning.

Lilla had a rapid summary of news for me. "Nothing much" had occurred, as she phrased it; her uncle had not yet left town; he had had a quarrel with his daughters, and she had an idea that it was all about the Opera and Mademoiselle Reichstein. Oh, hadn't I heard? Mademoiselle Reichstein had made such a success! Oh yes—splendid! But she had broken off her engagement rather suddenly, and she wanted to go to the other opera-house, and there was quite a turmoil about it; and Lilla believed there was going to be a lawsuit. But, however that might be, Mr. Lyndon was quite infatuated about her; and people would keep saying that he wanted to marry her; and his daughters were in such a way about it, and there was a row in the building, Lilla believed. She was quite delighted at the prospect of a "row" continuing and growing to be something serious, for she utterly detested Mr. Lyndon's daughters; and she was going to be introduced to Mademoiselle Reichstein.

"But if your uncle marries, Lilla, that will be rather a bad thing for you?"

"Yes; but I don't believe it will come to any thing. I should think a woman so young, and with such a career before her, isn't going to marry a man who has daughters quite as old as herself and once and a half as tall. If I were she, I know that nothing on earth should induce me to do such a thing. Oh, how I envy her! How happy some people are! What success they have, and gifts, and beauty! And what a miserable life a girl like me is doomed to lead! Here in this wretched old den! I wonder how one can live through it. I never cross the bridge but I think how sad and dreary my life is, and how much I should like to drown myself if I had the courage. *She* must be as happy as a queen. I envy her, and I admire her too."

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"Have you seen her?"

"No; her portrait only; and it was a wretched portrait too—a thing in a music-shop, with some rubbishy piece of music appended: but it made her beautiful and queenly, and sad too, I thought. But I am to see her. Is it possible you did not hear of her success down in the country?"

"Oh yes, of course I did. But I am tired of all the singers who are every one in turn to surpass Jenny Lind and Grisi, and who disappear in a season."

"But the town is ringing with her."

"Yes, so it was with Mademoiselle Johanna Wagner; so it was with no end of women. Where are they all now?"

"Well, I don't know; but I have quite made up my mind that this one shall succeed and have a splendid career, and come to know me and be very fond of me, and take me behind the scenes, and have me in her box; and please don't destroy my delicious dream. I have not many pleasant dreams here, I can tell you. I never saw success in a living form face to face before; and pray don't convince me that I am not really to see it now. If you have come back cynical and out of humor, pray go away again on your travels; although we were precious lonely without you, I can tell you that."

"Were you lonely without me?"

"Oh yes, very. Mamma thought you would never come back."

"And you, Lilla?"

"Yes; I too was very lonely."

"And you were glad when I came back?"

"Glad? Yes, surely. You don't suppose I was not glad?"

The frank look of kindly affectionate surprise with which Lilla spoke these words had a warming, almost a thrilling influence on me. I think I had begun of late to form a kind of vague idea that Lilla might easily be induced to fall in love with me. I certainly did not love her, and I saw nothing in her manner toward me which spoke of love. But we were so much thrown together, we were both so lonely, that I sometimes began to ask myself whether it would not be possible for me to descend from my pinnacle of sublime isolation and despair, and lift her toward my heart. I look back now upon myself and my ways at that time with the feeling which I suppose most people entertain toward their youth, curiously blended of regret and admiration and contempt. What a vain creature I was, and yet how stupidly timid and diffident! What a fool I was, and how convinced of my own wisdom! How miserable I was, and how happy! What an admiration I had for my own merits, and yet what a rapturous and servile gratitude I felt to any woman who seemed to cast a favoring eye upon me! I kept thinking complacently whether I really could accept Lilla's love, without asking myself whether any consideration on earth could induce her to accept me as a lover; and yet all the time I was filled with a sense of humiliating gratefulness to the girl for having condescended to be friendly and kindly to me. Of course I thought to myself, if I could make up my mind to come down from my clouds and try to love her, I must tell her openly, tragically, that I was a blighted being, that I had hardly any heart left to give, and so forth. Even then I had a faint doubt whether this would not be a little too much in the style of Dickens's Mr. Moddle, with whom I knew Lilla to be well acquainted; and what a pretty thing it would be if she were only to burst out laughing at my lachrymose avowal!

Yet the moment was tempting; the situation became critical. Lilla had her levities and her faults, that was plain enough; only a lover's eye could be blind to them, and I was not a lover. But they could surely be ameliorated, eradicated gently by patience and superior wisdom—mine, *par exemple*. Who did not once believe himself capable of reforming any one on whom he chose to try his hand? I am slow to believe in my own or any body else's reforming capabilities now; but I suppose I then thought that, if I but condescended to attempt the task, I could remove all the weaknesses and defects from poor Lilla's nature, and replace them by some splendid grafts of earnestness and lofty purpose.

However this may be, Lilla's friendly admission that she was lonely in my absence had sent a strange, sweet vibration through me. When this conversation occurred we were crossing St. James's Park. Thus far our roads lay together, and when there was a possibility of such companionship, we always took advantage of it. It was a beautiful evening, and the light of the setting sun threw a poetical glory over even the arid gravel and stunted trees of the park. It was a dangerous time and hour to walk with a pretty woman, and hear her tell you that she had been lonely in your absence.

I glanced at Lilla. Her eyes were downcast—only, I now believe, because the level rays of the evening sun threatened them—and there was a faint crimson on her cheeks. She was silent. I felt my soul dissolving in sentiment.

"Then you were really glad of my return, Lilla, and you thought of me in my absence?"

She looked up quickly, smilingly, perhaps just a little surprised.

"Thought of you? Oh yes, always! How could I help thinking of you?"

What I might have poured out in another second I am glad to say that I can never know. It would undoubtedly have been some idiotcy to be bitterly regretted by myself afterward; and, as I now know, not likely to have caused her any particular delight then, even if she had not laughed at it. But she suddenly stopped in her sentence, and caught me by the arm, and a carriage drove past us from behind. Two ladies were in it, and a gentleman whose iron-gray hair and purpling complexion I knew at a glance. I only saw the bonnets of the ladies.

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Lilla bowed to her uncle, and I saw her cheek redden.

"It's my uncle," she said; "and I know—I am sure—one of the ladies with him is Mdlle. Reichstein. I didn't even get a glimpse of her, did you?"

"No; I only saw bonnets."

"Oh, I wish I had seen her! I am sure it's she; I am so sorry! And he saw us. I don't care a bit; in fact, I am delighted, because now it will remind him of you; and I didn't like to speak too much about you, or too often, because—"

And Lilla really blushed for the second time that day.

But the blushing was useless now: the spell was broken; my sublime self-devotion vanished. Lilla's voice, and her evident first sensation of something like doubt or shame at being seen in my companionship, and her raptures about Mdlle. Reichstein, were enough. How full of kindness for me her whole heart was I could not but see; and I loved her in one way for that and other things; but the glamour of the moment was gone, and I left her when our ways divided at Pall Mall a free man, still faithful to my one memory and one love.

Two or three days passed away before an evening and an event came which I can never forget. I had been in town all day, and came home rather tired just after the last rays of a stormy sunset had sunk below the horizon of the low-lying region where we lived. My room, as I entered it, was in dusk; but I could see as I came in a letter for me standing on the chimney-piece. I went over apathetically and took it in my hand; but the sight of the inscription sent a fierce shock through me, and my head throbbed with a wild pain, born of surprise and sudden emotion. I knew that writing well. I put the letter down for a moment, just that my heart might beat less wildly, and my nerves become steady. Then I opened it and read:

"EMANUEL,—I have seen you again, and you did not know it. I was near you. After so many years, it was strange. I am glad we did not meet to speak. I only write this word to wish you may be happy always. Nothing is left but—greeting, and farewell.

"CHRISTINA."

I put the letter down and leaned upon the chimney-piece. I was for a while incapable of thinking. I was literally stricken to the heart. We had been close to each other, and I had not seen her! If the foolery of our modern days could have truth behind it, and a living man could really, by help of some spiritualistic incantation, be reached by the voice and affected by the presence of some loved being from another world, he might feel somewhat as I felt then, but without my bitterness. No voice reaching out of the shadow of the world that lies outside nature could have affected me with a more agonizing sense of unavailable nearness and hopeless distance. Near to me—close to me—her very writing lying on my table—and no clew or trace by which a word of mine might reach her! If I could but see her once—but speak half a dozen words—but tell her of my strong love! Was it not cruel thus to torture me with such a message? Why not leave me to my lonely struggle? I was comparatively happy; I was almost contented; I had not forgotten her, but she had become to me as the dead are, and I had no hope. Bitterly did I now recall my first knowledge of her departure, my first sense of her loss, my first agony of uncertainty and torment. Now all woke up again with keener pain, with a deeper sense of tantalized and thwarted love.

Perhaps she too, like myself, is unhappy, is struggling alone, and has sent out these few words for the poor sake of reaching a friendly ear by some means, as parting voyagers call a greeting to distant friends upon the fading shore, although no answer can reach them. Are we both, then, struggling unaided in this vast London? Has one city held us all these years, and I never knew it? Is she poor, like me, and hopeless? Or is she married and happy, and having seen me at last by chance, did she but look up for a moment and think of the boy whom years ago she loved, and, impelled by meaningless impulse, send him a word of greeting and farewell? Have I lost her utterly and forever, or will some other message, more distinct than this, reach me yet, and guide me to her?

This thought for a while lighted up a hope, a sickly, flickering hope, within me. Perhaps, as she lives, is near me, has seen me, has sent me a message, her mere words do not mean what she feels, and I shall hear from her soon again, and we shall meet. I was somewhat weak of late from over-exertion. I think I must have been weak indeed, in mind as well as in body, when such a hope could inspire me for a moment. Well I knew that even when Christina loved me most, she loved success yet more; and what temptation could my future offer to such a spirit? I looked from the window, and the drear evening gloom made the flat and swampy places around, the mouldering houses, the blighted trees, look grayer and ghostlier than ever. Heavy rain was now beginning to fall, and the sky was all cloud and gloom. Nothing on earth could look more dreary to me than the prospect out of doors, except, indeed, the personal prospect which my soul foreshadowed. Sad and heavy, like that mournful scene below—brightened by no ray of light, cheered by no pleasant sound—all dim, and misty, and gray. If I could find Christina, should I offer her a share of this one room, looking out on that swamp, and get her to canvass for pupils, who might learn music from her at sixpence a lesson, among the dirty children and the unfinished streets all round? I pictured her, as I saw so many women in the neighborhood, struggling for mere life, with children crying round her and cramping her

very efforts to get them bread, that they might eat of it and live. Why, there is a peculiar expression graven on the faces of a certain class of women in London, which cuts the very heart to look at. And why should I expect any better fortune for a woman doomed to be wife of mine? London garrets swarm with men infinitely better and more worthy of success than I, and yet on whom no gleam of fortune ever falls.

Once, it is true, I had more courage and more hope. But London struggle has something in it demoralizing. No contrast in life can be more chilling and crushing than that of ideal London with actual London in such a case as mine. To ideal London we look in our ardor as the youth does to the battle, which he pictures as all thrilling with the generous glory of strife, the rush of the exhilarating charge, the clangor of the bugle, the roar of the cannon, the cheers of the victor, the honor and the wreath, or the noble, soldier-like, dramatic death. Actual London is the slow, cold camping on the wet earth, the swamp, malaria, the ignoble hunger and thirst, the dull lying in the trenches, the mean physical exhaustion, the unrecognized, unrecorded disappearance. What has become of the poor, raw, boyish recruit who sank exhausted in the mud of the night-march, or was trampled to death in the retreat, or came back with a broken constitution from the hospital, to drag out a few obscure and miserable years at home? I seemed to myself to be like the most ignoble and the most unhappy of them. Should I wish Christina to share such fortunes —to become entangled in such a career?

Or if she were prosperous, could I beg of her prosperity, and be warmed meekly in the sun of her success?

This last idea was so hateful to me that I strode passionately up and down the room to banish it, and felt inclined to invoke curses on myself for the meanness which even allowed it to have an instant's possession of my mind.

Ah, no! She is lost, lost forever! Whether she lives in light or in gloom, she is lost alike to me! I could not brighten the gloom. I will never stoop to be illumined—a pitiful, poor, human planet—by the light. I take her farewell literally—and farewell!

A tap at the door broke in upon my lonely thoughts. The disturbance was grateful to me; any intruder would have been welcome at such a time. It was not an intruder, however, who sought to be admitted, but Lilla Lyndon. Her looks showed her to be brimful of some intelligence. She was dressed as if she had only just come in, and her cheeks and curls were sparkling with rain-drops.

"Do you know where I have been?" she began. "But you need not try to guess, for you never could succeed. I have been to see Mademoiselle Reichstein with my uncle."

"Indeed! Do you like her?"

"Yes, immensely. She is delightful, I think, nd so good, and very handsome. You don't seem at all interested in her. Wait a bit. I have something to tell you which will interest you, cold-hearted philosopher as you are. But stop—are you not well?"

"Yes, Lilla, quite well."

"You don't look like it, then. I'll send mamma to talk to you presently. Perhaps I have something to tell you which will help you to get better."

"I am not ill, indeed, Lilla."

"Well, let me get on with my news. My uncle came with me; but after a while he left me with Mademoiselle Reichstein, and I remained for more than an hour, and she sang to me delightfully; and she was so kind and good, and seemed to take such an interest in me, you can't think; only I put it down in my own mind to the account of the interest she takes in my revered uncle, who, if he's not very young, at least has plenty of money. However, she took such an interest in me that, when we were alone, I came to the point which I had at heart all through—and I spoke to her about you. Ah! now you begin at last to think it worth while listening to what I say."

Yes, I must own that even while she spoke a strange boding thrill passed through me, and I held my breath in a kind of agony.

"I can tell you I spoke highly of you, and told her how fond mamma was of you, and I too. I do wonder what you would have thought if you only knew what I allowed her to think in order to persuade her to take an interest in you."

"What did you allow her to think?"

"I declare you are quite hoarse, Emanuel. You are in for a bad cold."

"No, no, Lilla; do pray go on."

"Well, I had rather you guessed at my pious fraud. I didn't exactly say the false word, but I am afraid I gave it out somehow. She asked me a question about you, and about my interest in you, and I allowed her to think—oh, there, I am quite ashamed of myself; and I suppose a girl better brought up than I would not have done such a thing for all the world. But I have not been brought up well, and I never could stick at trifles to serve a friend—and, in fact, Mr. Temple, I think I allowed Mademoiselle Reichstein to believe that you and I were engaged, and only waited to be married until you had made your way a little. There's the whole truth out; and all I can say in my own defense is, that if I had not as much esteem for you and confidence in you, Emanuel Temple, as if you were my own brother, I would never, never, bad as I am, have been guilty of any thing so unblushing and unwomanly. There now, how dreadfully miserable you look! I really don't see that you need be so utterly humiliated and ashamed—I dare say Mademoiselle Reichstein did not think any the worse of *you*, whatever she may have thought of me."

I was hardly conscious of any meaning in these latest words of hers. I was not thinking of humiliation, or of what she had said on my behalf. One thought, one conjecture, was

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swelling up within me so as to flood and drown every other feeling.

"I feel greatly obliged to you, Lilla, greatly obliged," was all I could say.

"And you look it too."

"But Mademoiselle Reichstein?"

"Well, Mademoiselle Reichstein was most kind and amiable. She sat quite silent and thoughtful for a while, perhaps considering how best she could lend a helping hand. It must be a far more difficult matter than I thought, for she put her hand over her eyes, and remained thinking quite a time. Then she kissed me, and wished me all happiness. I felt like a shame-faced and convicted liar. Yes, she wished happiness to *me*—to me, the most unhappy, discontented, lonely, hopeless creature under the sun! —and then she sat down and wrote a letter to Princeps—the great Princeps himself, the manager of the Italian Opera—and I saw that she tore up two or three copies before she was satisfied with the writing (I believe half these *prima donnas* can't spell); and then she read it to me. It was all about you, and making it a personal favor to help you—very strongly put, I can tell you. I offered to post it as I came along, in order to be quite sure that it went; for she said Princeps was not in London now, and it would be impossible for you to see him for some weeks; and she asked me—but this I really ought not to tell you."

"Tell me all, Lilla—all, all!"

"Good gracious, how hoarse you are! Well, she is so kind and thoughtful that she begged me not to tell you any thing about the whole affair. People don't always like, she said, to think that they are being helped along, and it would be better if you supposed that you were being sought out—for you will be sought out—for your own merit only. Was not that considerate and delicate? But I know you have no such nonsense about you, and I want you to know how kind she is, and so I have told you, though I promised I wouldn't—the second fib to-day on your account, Mr. Emanuel Temple. Oh, that reminds me that I must have let drop your full name somehow, for she seemed quite to know it."

Oh, God in heaven! I stood up and clenched my hands.

"And now I think that's all; except that she gave me her picture, and I think her so beautiful! Oh, how I do wish she would marry my uncle! Why, what is the matter with you?"

"Show me the picture, Lilla."

She fought in her pocket, then in the bosom of her dress. I stood trembling with excitement, keen pains again darting through my forehead, the square of light made by the window rising and falling before my eyes.

"Surely I can't have lost it? No, here it is. Is she not beautiful? Such a mass of hair, and all her own too."

I took the picture from her. It was one of the old-fashioned daguerreotypes, now as completely gone out of the world as Miss La Creevy's enameled miniatures. When I first seized it and gazed upon it the light so fell as to blot it out completely, and my impatient eyes only looked upon a blank space. Forcing down my emotions, I brought it to the window, held it in the proper light, and then—

"Lilly, my dear; Lilly, my own," broke in, thank Heaven! the plaintive tones of Mrs. Lyndon.

"Yes, mamma; what's up?"

"My child, you mustn't stay in your wet things. Come down, dear; I want you."

"Oh, what does it matter! Yes, I am coming. Keep the picture for the present, Emanuel, and fall in love with it if you can. I would, I know, if I were a man. I'll send up for it presently."

Thank God she was gone! I could not have endured her presence much longer without betraying my feelings by a wild explosion. Yes; it was as I expected—the face in the daguerreotype was the face of Christina Braun. Her dream, then, had come true. She had done her part. She was successful.

Ah, God! I hardly needed to look at the poor little daguerreotype or to struggle against the growing dusk for a clear sight of that face. By some force of ineffable conviction, the moment Lilla came into the room and spoke of Mdlle. Reichstein, I guessed the truth of which I had never dreamed before. Often as she had talked to me of Mdlle. Reichstein, the notion had never before occurred to my mind that the successful *prima donna* could be my lost Christina. But the letter—the few lines I had myself received that night—brought her back in my mind as a living reality again, and I knew the whole truth before my eyes or ears had any evidence of it.

Yes, I am unable to account for it, but I knew it to be the fact that the moment Lilla entered the room and named the name of Mdlle. Reichstein, it came on me with the convincing force of a revelation that she and Christina Braun were one, and that I had lost Christina forever.

She was successful. Did I not know that she would be some time? And yet it came on me now with a surprise which was like agony. Like agony? Nay, it was agony; for it severed us more, far more, than death could do. She was lost, lost to me. The one hope which had lighted my lonely life so long had utterly gone out. When, years ago, I used to hold her to my heart and talk to her of her future success, I always spoke of it as conjoined with my own, as the crown of a common happiness. In how many hours of love and hope, in how many happy walks under the summer stars, in how many silent dreams, had we pictured that triumph for her and for me! We were to make our way together through life, to become successful and famous, and then to come back and amaze the little town, which we magniloquently declared did not know us. Or, if we did not succeed—for I at least had my moments of distrust and

doubt—I always looked forward to our struggling and perhaps suffering together, still happy because together. Even our sudden and strange separation I had sometimes regarded as a glorious self-sacrifice, to be crowned and rewarded some day. Many a night had I returned sick of heart and weary of foot to my London lodging, and, musing over the hours of happiness, love, and hope I had once enjoyed, been cheered and brightened by the thought that perhaps my struggles here were working in unseen co-operation with hers toward the same end. There was still at least a link of companionship, and a hope that it might draw us together one day. As my eyes were fixed upon the pale, far-off star of my hope, it was some consolation and joy to think that wherever she might be her eyes and her soul were turned toward it too.

And now, behold, one half at least of our most ardent prayer has been fulfilled. She has won all we dreamed of and hoped for. Why do I not rejoice? I was to have been the first to hail her triumph, and now I greet it with agony and shame; as if her success were my defeat and humiliation. And it is so. I feel that no poverty, no failure, no temporary isolation under the pressure of misfortune could raise such barriers between her and me as this fatal granting of one half our prayer. Poor people may become less poor, or they may grow familiar with poverty and learn to endure it, or they may conquer its pain by the strength of love and hope. But this revelation of her success has sounded the last of love and hope for me. Why, all these years that I have been picturing her heart as turning eternally toward mine, and panting for reunion, she has been simply making her way in the world! She has run over some of the most thrilling chords of human experience; she has won every height to which she aspired; while I have been removing from one town to another, my greatest triumph to exchange a garret for a small back-parlor. I feel crushed down by grief and shame. She must despise me. She *has* actually patronized me! The great singer has granted, at the humble petition of a poor girl, a letter of introduction, to help a struggling and obscure poor devil to an engagement in a chorus. I had imagined many a renewal of our former days, many a first greeting after our long separation, many a meeting under all conceivable circumstances of joy and of sorrow; but I had thought of nothing like *this*. I had forgotten to picture myself as a broken-down beggar petitioning for help; and her as a triumphant and splendid *prima donna* granting me the favor at the solicitude of a wealthy and elderly lover. Why, it seems but last week that she wrote those letters I keep in my trunk, full of such love, and tenderness, and admiration—admiration for me! and now I am her debtor for a letter of introduction, obtained through the importunity of Lilla Lyndon and the influence of her rich uncle, in order that, if I am well conducted, I may receive perhaps an engagement in the chorus of the Italian Opera! I wonder she did not send me a small present of money! But perhaps if I obtain a place as chorus-singer through her influence, and conduct myself properly, and never appear to recognize her, she may assist me in some other way too. She may, for example, give Lilla the making of some of her fine stage-dresses, or even the place of her own dressing-room attendant; and if Lilla and I get married, the great *prima donna* may kindly become godmother to one of our children! Ah, but if the *prima donna* should marry Lilla's rich uncle, then indeed something better could doubtless be done for Lilla than to marry her to a wretch like me! In the bitterness of my heart it seemed as if my love for Christina had turned into hate.

I was only aroused from the depth of bitter thought into which I had plunged by my own voice—by the sound of a deep, involuntary, irrepressible groan, wrung from me by agony of love, disappointment, shame, hate. In the silent, darkling room the groan sounded hollow and ghostly, as in a vault of death. It aroused me as a dreamer is sometimes awakened by the sound of his own babble or laughter.

I started up with the resolve to do something. Yes, there was something I could and would do—I would see her face to face. I would go to her, speak to her, ask of her how she dared to insult me with her patronage. I meant no appeal to the love of the old days, no poor and pitiful plaint, no ghastly effort to recall the dead past from the grave. No; we are parted forever; and I accept my doom, and make no complaint. Only she shall know that I want no patronage, and will stoop to accept none. Let her spare me that. For the sake even of the old days which she has forgotten, for the sake of the love which I would not now have her renew if I could—no, by Heaven!—let her spare me that! Let me but see her, speak to her, vindicate to her face my pride and my independence; and perhaps—perhaps I then can better bear with life.

Filled with this thought, I went down stairs and tapped at the door of Mrs. Lyndon's room, endeavoring meanwhile to still the fierce beatings of my heart, and to keep some control over my voice and manner. Lilla's voice called to me to come in. I had hoped to find her mother there, thinking I could get on better in ordinary conversation if there were three of us at it than in mere *tête-à-tête* with my quick and sharp-eyed Lilla. But I could hear Mrs. Lyndon at work at some cookery-business below in the kitchen, and Lilla was alone. Must I confess the truth? I almost hated the poor girl for her well-meant, kindly, luckless interference on my behalf.

When I entered, Lilla was apparently in a condition of great comfort and happiness. She was lying, or rather huddled up, on a little sofa, which was drawn over to the table, on which a lamp threw a soft and pleasant light,

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and she was reading a novel. Lilla loved novel-reading. She had a great shawl gathered cozily around her, covering her from neck to feet—indeed, I think her feet must have been coiled up under her, sultana fashion, for greater comfort; for the night, though in summer, had turned a little chilly, and Lilla had been out in the rain on my behalf. In fact, the poor girl had probably taken off her wet dress, and had wrapped herself in a shawl as an easy substitute. I know she always liked to get the room to herself when she had a novel to read, for her mother was a dreadfully irritating person at such a time, full as she always was of anxious questions and perplexing recommendations. So Lilla was evidently very happy, and as she looked up at me with her beaming eyes, and her pretty head peeping above the great enveloping shawl, in which the whole of her figure was lost, she must have been very charming to any eyes but mine. In my bitter, diseased, distracted state of mind it irritated me to see her looking so cozy and pretty and happy. I felt much as an angry man feels when, striding moodily to his fire, he stumbles over the sleek, contented, purring cat that lies basking on the hearth-rug.

"Have you brought me my picture?" asked my happy Lilla.

There was an intense odor of savory frying below, which I grieve to think must have conduced a good deal to the happiness of this good girl's mind. Her harmless and comfortable little sensuousness was regaled and propitiated on the odor from below, like the good-will of the old gods on the steam of the fat sacrifice.

"Yes, I have brought it."

"Isn't it lovely?"

"Very."

"How chillingly you say that! Men have no taste; and I am sure it is all nonsense to say that *we* don't admire pretty women more than you do. I am quite in love with that face and hair; and you don't seem to care a straw about it."

"Well, I think, I believe I should like to keep it a little longer, just to study it, Lilla, and understand it a little, if you don't object, and will leave it to me only for to-night."

Had I been asking Lilla to elope with me, or to steal her uncle's purse for me, I could not have preferred the request in more awkward and stammering accents. My pretty one gathered herself into something like a more upright posture on the sofa, and looked at me with all the inquisitive, penetrating brightness of her eyes.

"Oh yes, surely. I am very glad you want to look at it a little more, for I should be so pleased if you came to admire it as I do. But I don't understand you to-night, somehow—you don't seem like yourself."

"All the better if I seem like somebody else—any body else, Lilla."

"Nonsense! Tell me one thing, and speak truly, and without any evasion or chaff—are you at all sick? Because, if you are, I really must set mamma at you; but if not—I mean, if there's any thing wrong that isn't sickness, or catching cold, or that sort of thing—mamma would be only a bore and a plague to you, and you had better be let alone. Tell me frankly, do you wish to be let alone?"

"Indeed, Lilla, I am perfectly well."

"Then you want to be let alone?"

"I see you have been reading. What's the novel?"

"Oh, a charming thing—so beautiful and poetic; only it is so sad—*The Improvisatore*; do you know it? by Hans Christian Andersen, the Danish novelist. I have just been reading such a touching passage. The hero was in love with an actress, you know, a beautiful creature, and they got separated somehow—through a mistake entirely—and he never saw her for years and years after; and when at last he came to see her again (on the stage), for the first time since their separation, she was quite withered and old, and her beauty was all gone. It is such a touching chapter. All her youth was gone, and her good looks, and she was old."

"Even beautiful actresses, Lilla, must get old."

"But why were they separated? It is too sad; I don't like stories that are so sad."

"Yet you read it, and think it charming."

"Yes, I can't help being delighted with it. But it is too melancholy. I can't bear to think of their long, long separation, and of her being old and withered when at last they met. I suppose such things do happen?"

"I suppose they do. I think I have heard of such separations, or read of them, perhaps."

Again Lilla looked curiously at me, and she put down the book.

"Speaking of beautiful actresses, Lilla," I said, with a supreme effort to be light and careless, "does your beautiful friend, Mademoiselle Reichstein, live far from here; and did you walk home through all the rain?"

"Yes. It was rather a distance; but I didn't mind in the least."

"Did you tell me where it was? I quite forget."

"In Jermyn Street, just opposite an hotel—I don't know the number—a very nice place. Some elderly person lives with her—a companion, or friend, or something of the kind."

Mrs. Lyndon just then came up, and pressed me to stay with them and have supper; but I told them I had to go into town again. I had forgotten to see somebody with whom I had an appointment, and must try to find him now, late though it was.

I got out of the house somehow. It was now a streaming wet night, and I tramped long enough before I could find an omnibus going my way. When I got at last to the Haymarket it was half past ten o'clock, and I was very wet. An appropriate hour, a pleasant condition, in which to present myself as a visitor at the door of a lady's boudoir! I felt a grim and bitter satisfaction in the thought of my forlor

and wretched appearance. I almost wished that I were in rags, that I might be the more savagely in contrast with her condition—that I might stand in utter wretchedness before her, and, fierce in my desolate independence, fling back her patronage and her written vows of love. I longed to stand before her and say, "Look at this ruined and hopeless wretch, this ragged beggar! This was your lover! There are your written vows of love for him, and thus he flings them back to you, with the offer of your queenly patronage. Pauper though he may be, you shall not dare to befriend him. Let the beggar die. He shall not, at least, be fed with the crumbs that fall from your table!"

I found the house without difficulty. A waiter standing at the door of Cox's Hotel told me at once where Mdlle. Reichstein the singer lodged. The drawing-room windows were all dark. In my savage mood I felt bitterly disappointed at the prospect of not seeing her after all. I knocked at the door.

Mdlle. Reichstein had gone, the servant told me.

Gone where?

She didn't quite know; somewhere abroad: to Paris, she thought. She went that evening, by the night-mail.

Could she inquire, and find out for me?

She went into the house, but came back to say she really could not get to know. Mdlle. Reichstein had gone certainly to the Continent, with her maid and the other lady; to Paris first, probably, but the lady of the house thought she was very likely going somewhere farther away.

Would she return here soon?

Oh no, certainly not. Not before next season.

That was all. I could find out nothing else.

I turned away from the door with a sickening sense of disappointment and hopelessness. Ah, only the Power above could tell—I surely could not—how much of a secret, passionate longing to see her again, for any purpose, on any terms, was mingled with my fierce resolve to confront her, and to fling her back her agonizing proffer of service.

I turned into the glaring, chattering, hell-lighted Haymarket—a stricken, hopeless wretch. Despite the rain that still came down pretty heavily, this Babel of harlotry was all alive and aflame with its beastly gayety.

I strode my way along with head down and reckless demeanor, careless whom I jostled. Blindly I struck up against somebody, who first drew back and swore at me, and then, seizing me by my arm, exclaimed:

"My heroic preserver! would you overturn rudely the friend who longed to meet you? What! not know me? How bears himself *ce gros militaire?*"

Of course I knew him. It was my confounded friend of Dover.

"I told you we should meet again," he said. "I don't know that it's quite a fortunate thing r you; but we are all in the hands of the destinies. You see Heaven would bring us together."

"The devil rather, I should think," was my grumbled answer.

"Let it be the devil, dear young friend, if you have faith only in him. It cheers me to find that you believe even in the devil; youth is so unbelieving nowadays. But you are cynical to-night, which means, I dare say, that *she* is faithless or out of humor. Bear up, and let us be merry. Look here: you are wet, so am I; you are out of sorts, so am I. Let us spend a jovial hour together, and mingle our tears."

I could have welcomed just then the society of Satan. He not appearing, I suffered my other friend to put his arm in mine and lead me away.

CHAPTER XIII.

GOODBOY'S BROTHER.

I AWOKE next morning with a fierce headache, a deep sense of moral debasement, and a still deeper sense of savage satisfaction in my own degradation. I contemplated a sort of moral suicide. It seemed like an act of vengeance on her who had loved me and now cast me away, thus to crush and ruin the nature of the being to whom she once turned in love.

I am not fond of oral confessions or moral self-exposures, and therefore I hasten to say that my abasement—this my first abasement—would have been in the eyes of any ordinary Haymarket *habitué* a very small affair indeed. I drank too much that night—and for the first time—that was all. As the next day wore on, and I grew better accustomed to the quite new sense of shame, I frankly told Lilla Lyndon of my excess of the previous night, and she did not seem to think a great deal about the matter. I was, on the whole, rather disappointed that she took it so composedly. Moral suicide, after all, seemed a commonplace process.

Yet Lilla looked grave and frowned warningly at me when she saw me going out again about the same hour that night.

"Once and away," she observed, "mayn't be very bad; but take care, Emanuel, or we shall all be sorry."

I was going into the Haymarket, where I had pledged myself to meet my friend again. A queer sort of fascination drew me toward him; and some words he had let drop the previous night—words I now remembered but faintly—had keenly quickened my interest in him. When we parted I promised to meet him in the colonnade of the opera-house at nine o'clock; and at nine I was there. Very soon after he made his appearance, and I noted at once that the appearance he made was considerably changed. He was all new, from hat to boots, and his gloves were of dainty lavender.

"Surprised at the change, my dear young friend?" he observed, complacently. "Don't be ashamed to confess that you have been look-

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"I TOLD YOU WE SHOULD MEET AGAIN."

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ing at me with eyes of wonder and admiration. I am not susceptible of offense; and the homage of the ingenuous can never displease the serene soul. I was very shabby-looking yesterday, and now I am not so. I do not blush to confess that the change is not wholly owing to my own merit or industry."

"You told me you were a great hand at billiards, and indeed I saw some evidence of your skill last night."

"So you did. I think I rather astonished you and the others too. But it isn't that. You see me in the sunshine of a prosperity the source of which you could never guess. Indeed, it upsets the creed of half a lifetime with me. I should never have believed it, were I not a living proof of the fact. Listen, youth; and, if prematurely given over, as you doubtless are, to cynicism, learn now a new and refreshing lesson of life. I am a living evidence of a woman's gratitude."

"Glad to hear it."

"But you don't seem sufficiently startled. Did you ever find a woman true and grateful?"

"No, by God!"

"Aha, there you are with your bears! I thought as much. There was good earnest in that vow. Will you come with me to my lodgings? Yes, I *have* lodgings near at hand; that's part of the mystery. Come with me. I long to be a host once more, especially to one who, like myself, so evidently belongs to the brotherhood of poor devils."

We walked along Jermyn Street. When we passed the house where *she* so lately lived my eyes turned unconsciously toward it and fixed themselves on it. He, too, was looking that way; it was on the other side of the street. He noticed my gaze.

"How odd!" he observed; "you are looking at No. 15—I am looking at No. 15. It can't have the same story for you and for me. Did you catch a sight of some pretty Mary-Jane in smart cap and ribbons? Frivolous youth!"

Frivolous youth made no answer, and indeed remained silent until we had reached Bury Street, and gone some way down it.

My companion stopped at a door, took out a latch-key, opened the door with it, and waved to me with an air of gracious lordliness to enter.

"My lodgings!" he exclaimed; "second-floor front."

The second-floor front was a small, handsomely-furnished sitting-room, with bedroom *en suite*. My friend lighted a lamp, and motioned me to an arm-chair.

"I took these rooms at once to-day," he said, "on receiving the unexpected mark of gratitude of which I spoke to you. They are plain but commodious. The engravings on the wall are not remarkable as works of art. Let me see: 'The Happy Days of Charles the First'—simple inanity. Her gracious Majesty on horseback in military habit. Well, well, let us be always loyal, however the court-painter may try it. 'Phœbe'—a young woman simpering over a fowl of some sort—dove, I presume—and apparently wearing only her chemise, which she has omitted to fasten round the neck: idiotcy! No matter. There's a piano, you see, which is something. Do you love music?"

"Love it, no! No more, that is. Live by it."

"Live by it, and not love it! No, you can't! Not even in this cursed day of quacks and shams and successful Jack Puddings can any man live by music who does not love it. I only wish the converse of the proposition held equally, and that every one who loved it could live by it. Were that so, some people might have been more virtuous and independent, perhaps, than they are. Now, my young friend, whose name I have not even yet the honor of knowing, but shall presently, perhaps, ask to be favored with—there is brandy, there is water, and yonder are cigars. I am going to sing a little, but smoke if you will; it can't put my pipe out."

He sat down to the piano, his queer little legs hardly touching the ground, and his long arms spreading over the instrument like the wings of some ungainly bird. One could hardly expect much sweet music from so ridiculous-looking a form, surmounted by a curly black wig; but he played with no common skill and with quite uncommon feeling and fervor. Presently he sang, in full, sweet, and solemn tones, the hymn, "Lord, remember David." Strangely pathetic, deep, and passionate sounded that mournful appeal as it issued from the lips of this singular and scoffing little creature. I own that it touched me as much as it puzzled me, so profound seemed the sincerity with which the prayer and the plaint went up in that tender, thrilling voice.

"Lord, remember David; teach him to know Thy ways!" Every word seemed to come from him with a pathetic, passionate earnestness, so deep that one could almost for the time imagine he heard the half-despairing utterance of some generous and noble nature crying out for strength to battle against temptation, and for light to see in the world's foul darkness. I dreaded the close of the hymn, so much did I shrink from the contrast of levity or profanity with which I felt sure he would instantly follow it. But I was mistaken. He sat silent a moment or two when he had finished, and then jumped up from the piano and walked up and down the room. After a while I could hear him repeating to himself some of the words of the prayer in a low tone, as if it refreshed him to dwell on them.

"Now then," he said at last, "you who live on music, but, I think you said, don't care a curse about it, give us a musical blasphemy—I mean, of course, a song from unenthusiastic lips. Come along; make no apologies or pretexts. I dare say I have heard a hundred better singers before now, so you need not stand on ceremony."

I sang something for him, accompanying myself. He stood behind me the while, and now and then uttered a sort of growl of satisfaction or grunt of discontent.

"Ah, I thought so," he observed when I had done; "yes, I felt sure I could not be mistaken.

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It *was* you, then, I heard at the Dover concert, Mr. Emanuel Temple! Well, Temple, I've heard a good many worse singers than you, and a few better. I think you ought to get on, though I do fancy somehow that you want soul. But I should say, with training and cultivation, and the advice of qualified critics—like myself, for example—you ought to make your way, Temple. I advise you to stick to it, Temple. I decline to offer you the blessing of an old man, Temple; first, because I don't admit being old; and next, because I fear my blessing would be like that of the priest in the story, and worth considerably less than a farthing. But I have prophesied of singers before now, and prophesied correctly. I was hinting to you just now of that rare and strange thing, a woman's gratitude, and the romantic story is a story of a singer."

The glance I had seen him give at the windows which were lately Christina's, and the words he let fall immediately after, had aroused my curiosity. But I thought I had observed enough of his perverse and eccentric little nature to know that the more readily I displayed my curiosity the less inclined would he be to gratify it; so I affected an air of supreme cynicism, and coolly said:

"Then you expect me to believe in woman's gratitude? Thank you; but I really can't oblige you so far, and I have no faith in romantic stories."

"Nothing amuses me," he replied, "so much as the pert affectation of cynicism in brats of boys. You know very well, Temple, that if you left your real nature to itself, it would be rather credulous and soft than otherwise. Do you know now that you struck me from the first as a good-natured and simple sort of fellow—an honest young spooney, in fact; a lad that any smart girl might turn round her finger—a being doomed by nature to be married to a woman who will assume the wearing of the breeches as her natural right? That is quite my idea of you, Temple; give you my word, as a candid friend and admirer."

"Well, but without occupying ourselves in the discussion of my moral organization, what of your romantic story, and your grateful woman?"

"You want to hear it, evidently."

"Not very particularly; but if you insist—"

"Well, here it is. When I came to London the other day, and while yet casting about for the best way to torment my nearest relatives and raise some money, I devoted myself to *flâner* a little on *the* side of Regent Street, thinking of the old days, Temple, when I too was a club lounger, and a man about town, and so on. I happened to glance into a photographer's, and there I saw a photograph of a singer, the singer of the season, the woman the two opera-houses have been squabbling about, you know."

"Yes. Reichstein."

"Reichstein, of course. In a moment I recognized her as an old friend, Temple."

"Of yours? She—Mdlle. Reichstein—an old friend of yours!"

"Why not? What are you glowering at? She's not an old friend of yours, I suppose; and even if she is, you needn't look daggers at *me*. Did I say an old friend of mine? Why, man, I discovered her, I invented her, I created her! I crossed the Channel with her years ago when she was a poor little thing going to Paris, and hoping to get on to Italy, and I took quite a paternal liking to her; quite paternal, Temple, I can assure you, and for the good reason that she wouldn't allow of any other sort of liking; and I introduced her in Paris to an Italian fellow whom I knew, a fellow who was mad on two things—Music and Italian Revolution; and he quite took her up, and I only saw her once after in Milan, where he was having her drilled for the Scala. That, too, is four or five years ago; and to tell you the honest truth, Temple, I never thought of the little thing from that day to the day when I saw her portrait here in this den of thieves."

"Did you go to see her?"

"Well, I did call; but she didn't happen to be in, and I was not very sorry perhaps, for, as you can testify, my gifted vocalist, I was not quite in splendid trim about that time. But I left a letter with a mild reminder of my early services and a warm congratulation upon her brilliant success, to which it was gracefully hinted that my artistic insight had not a little contributed. Then there came an oblique, pathetic intimation that Fortune had not perhaps been quite so favorable to myself; and in short I am afraid it was conveyed more or less vaguely that gratitude and sympathy might not unreasonably take the form of an early and liberal remittance."

I had hard work to keep down my rising disgust and contempt.

"And the remittance came?" I said, to say something, as I saw he was looking toward me, with his head on one side and his little beady black eyes twinkling inquiringly.

"Yes, the remittance came, and it was liberal; so liberal in fact that I have put off for the present opening the campaign I am prepared to undertake. So you perceive, Temple, that there are women who can be grateful; perhaps I should rather say that there are men so happily endowed as to be capable of exciting the sentiment of gratitude in woman's breast. Between ourselves, the service I rendered was not very great, for I had actually at the time a sort of general and roving commission from my friend the Italian revolutionary to look out for fine fresh voices wherever they could be picked up—he had a mania for establishing an artistic *parc aux cerfs* of young voices—only artistic and vocal, Temple, nothing more; he was a very Bayard or Scipio in that way; and I simply sent the girl to him, and thought no more about the matter. What of that? It only makes the gratitude more touching. It is a noble and a holy thing, you know, to cal'

up such a feeling; that sentiment in the woman's breast is cheaply bought by her at the money."

"In fact, you place her under a fresh obligation?"

"Well, as you put it so, yes."

"And found perhaps a claim hereafter for another remittance?"

"That is your sneer, I dare say. No, my scornful young friend, I think I shall be content with that much from that quarter. Let me tell you, however, to show how little I value your feeble-minded insinuation, that I am one of those who are rather proud to be relieved by the soft and generous hand of woman. I think history records that John duke of Marlborough, and other great men, acknowledged a similar sentiment, or at least acted on it. Nature is all symbolic, Temple; whence do we derive our earliest sustenance? From woman's generous bosom. Go to, then; the meaning of Nature's beautiful parable must be evident to all true and poetic hearts. Mine is essentially a poetic nature; yours I perceive is not; you look at the bare rude fact of my pocketing the young woman's money, and do not see the delightful illustration of Nature's noblest and oldest purpose which it symbolizes. What's the matter with you?"

"I have not been quite well lately; but—"

"Drink brandy, Temple; drink again."

"Do you know whether—whether this lady, Mdlle. Reichstein, is married?"

"Not I. How should I know; and what do I care? Very likely she is; they all get married, these people. The flag of matrimony is a very convenient emblem."

I got up to go away; his talk was hateful to me; and yet I clung to any feeble hope that I might extract some knowledge about her past life and her probable future.

"Do you know where she is gone?"

"Russia, I believe; but I am not certain. Somebody told me that some rich Londoner, a member of parliament and patron of the drama—I don't know him, but, as Charles Lamb said, 'd— him at a venture'—was always to be seen hanging after her, and making rather an idiot of himself."

"Yes, I have heard of that," I interposed, very incautiously; "and I know who it is—a Mr. Lyndon."

"What did you say?" exclaimed the little creature, leaping from the chair in which he sat, and standing upright before me. "What name did you give?"

"Lyndon—a Mr. Lyndon, a member of the House!"

"Earth and hell! Tommy Goodboy! Tommy Goodboy himself! Of all the hypocrites of this most hypocritical age, Tommy Goodboy is the greatest hypocrite. Among all the scoundrels in an age of scoundrelism, no scoundrel like Tommy Goodboy. Look at me, Temple! I am Goodboy's victim: Goodboy stands in my shoes; Goodboy wallows in my money! He is the head of the family, the respectable citizen, the model man, the patron of every charity, the Mæcenas of art; and I am the ruffian, the outcast, the billiard-room hanger-on, the frightful example!"

An idea at last began to dawn upon me as to the identity of my queer friend. Were these, then, the two faces I had seen vaguely and tantalizingly shadowed in his? Lilla's face, and Mr. Lyndon's? Is this creature, this half-crazed sensualist, this selfish loafer, this wretch living on alms and extorted money, this combination of Hircius and Spungius, my poor, pretty, kindly Lilla's father?

He was now walking up and down the room, throwing his arms wildly about like a little madman. I went up to him as gently and kindly as I could.

"You, then," I said, "are the elder brother of Mr. Lyndon?"

"Who the devil else do you think I am? Do you suppose I am proud of being that cold-hearted, sneaking humbug's brother? Yes; I am his brother—the brother whom he cheated out of house and home, out of his father's favor, out of his inheritance, out of every thing that could make life worth having. Was I an idle, good-for-nothing scape-grace? Of course I was. But what was he? All that I did openly and recklessly, he did cunningly and underhand. How did he ruin me at last? By betraying to my father the one good thing I ever did in all my life. It's as true as light, Temple. My father cut me off without a rap because I had been d—d fool enough to marry a pretty girl instead of seducing her. Whatever misfortune may happen to you in life, Temple, never do a virtuous action. Be warned in time by me. When I die, or hang myself, if there can by any means be raised money enough to set up a tombstone over me, let my epitaph describe me as the man whom Respectability and Virtue outlawed and robbed, because he had once in his life—only just once—failed to behave like a scoundrel."

I was on the point of blurting out some hasty words which would have admitted my knowledge of Lyndon's wife and daughter. Fortunately, however, I restrained myself in time, and recollected how more than doubtful it was whether they would be the better for any indiscretion which put such a creature on their track. Poor, poor Lilla! with her good heart, her sweet kindly nature, her harmless vanities, and at least not unnatural hopes and aspirings, to think that this unfortunate and worthless wretch, whose chief or sole excuse seemed to be his half-crazed eccentricity, should be her father! I always fancied that the poor girl cherished in her secret heart some fond romantic hope that the lost mysterious father might one day reappear, redeemed, penitent, and splendid, to claim his daughter and lead her into the sphere which she thought her rightful place. I know that she always regarded her father as some brilliant aristocrat

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who had stepped down from his high rank for love of her poor mother — some Egmont or Leicester to whom Mrs. Lyndon was the Clara or Amy Robsart; and he filled her imagination even in his fall rather as an archangel ruined than as any commonplace sinner. I know—she often hinted as much to me—that she secretly yearned for him, and waited for him to come some day and redeem her from poverty and meanness, and the society of petty cares and small intelligences; and to bring her to a sphere where there should be bright surroundings, and ease and luxury, and a life with many tints in it, and vivid conversation, and books worth reading, and men who could pay graceful homage and whom one could marry, and women well-dressed and vivacious and lovely. Often I had thought to myself, in my odd moods of whimsical melancholy, that Lilla's phantom father and my phantom Christina beguiled and befooled us both alike, and to as little purpose; and I wondered whether, if Lilla could know my story and my dreams as well as I knew and guessed hers, she would not look on me with the same kind of wondering pity wherewith I regarded her. And now, behold, another bond of companionship and union! Lilla had found for me my lost love: lo, I have found her lost father! See, Lilla, there he is—that broken-down, ridiculous reprobate yonder, that billiard-room loafer, that ruined, rattlepate wretch in the black wig, who is stamping up and down the room, blaspheming as he goes!

"Mr. Lyndon!"

"My dear young friend, a thousand pardons! You recall me to myself, and remind me that I am not playing the host to perfection. I *am*, I fear, a little egotistic sometimes; but what would you have of a man who has had to contend against the world and his wife—his own wife, Temple; not the world's, mind—for so many years? Adversity, Temple, is the parent of egotism. Pardon my distraction."

"I was not thinking of that; I was going to ask a question."

"Propound. I reserve to myself the right of not answering, should the answer tend to criminate me. In a moral point of view, Temple, it would not be easy for me to give any answer relating to my own personal history which would not tend a little that way. But go on, youth of the gloomy brow."

"Only this. What about your wife? You said you were married."

"Did I admit so much? My old weakness—too much confidence and candor. No matter. You ask me what about my wife? Give you my word, Temple, I don't know; I don't, really. I have been away so long, knocking about the plains of windy Troy, that I positively don't know where to find my Penelope now that I have come back."

"Should you like to?"

"Oh dear no—not in the least. I couldn't think of it; she's doubtless very happy, and I should grieve to disturb her: or perhaps she is not very happy, and then the sight of her would disturb me. No, Temple, a man of refined taste shrinks from unidealizing—if you will allow me to use such a word—from unidealizing the poetic perfectness of married life by too much of vulgar intercourse with its prosy details."

"Still, as she is your wife—"

"Just so; there it is, you see. If she were not, then it would be quite a different thing: but she is my wife, and I know it to my cost. I paid a heavy debt for the sweet privilege of calling her so, and I am not ardent for any more of her mild society. You look horrified, I perceive. Frankly, I don't care."

"She may be poor and lonely—"

"My good fellow, am not *I* poor and lonely? Could any one be poorer than I was the other day, and shall be soon again, no doubt? Am I not lonely, or worse than lonely, in having no companionship but that of a silly and moping young moralist like you? Do you think adding two poor people together produces wealth? Put together cipher and cipher, and see how much better off you are for the result. Besides, have I not told you I know nothing, absolutely nothing, of her whereabouts?"

"But suppose—"

"I don't want to suppose: I decline to suppose. I tell you, Temple, I can't live on pap; some men can, I believe; I can't. Food for babes does not nourish me. I lived on it long enough, and you see the result. If there is any thing in life I utterly detest, it is puling, meek, mawkish goodness. I rage at it; it sets me mad. I long to tear and tatter it."

"But your child—your daughter?"

"Did I tell you I had a daughter? Really, you find me in a strangely-confiding mood to-night. Well, I have a daughter; at least, I know I had, and I believe I still have. What then?"

"Only one might have thought—"

"Yes, one might, no doubt. One might have thought that the father's heart would melt; that he would burst into sobs, and exclaim, in broken accents, 'My angel chee-ild!'—that he would weep on the neck of the good person who had appealed to his paternal feelings, and become a respectable member of society. In the domestic melodrama, Temple, from which I perceive already your principal ideas of life are drawn—what's the price of the gallery-seats in the Victoria?—that sort of thing does, I believe, familiarly occur. But this, Temple, is real life; and we are not on the stage of the Victoria. I make no doubt my daughter's a very well-brought-up and proper young woman, who would look with horror on such a reprobate as I am; and I can not say that the voice of Nature shrieks very powerfully or plaintively in my ears. No, Temple, it won't do."

"Then have you really no care for any thing?"

"Yes!" he answered, in vehement and fierce tones—I had long been expecting an outburst

of passion—"for money and for freedom! For money to spend, and for freedom to spend it in! Give me these—and I *will* have them, wherever I get them—and I can enjoy every thing that life gives for enjoyment, from moonbeams and music up to absinthe and madness. But I will have money, and I will be free! I will, I will! I don't care who or what comes between me and my way of life; I sweep it out of my road and go on. Don't talk to me of nature and domestic affections, and drivel of that kind; I don't want them—I've had enough of them to last my time. Hate is much more in my line than love. I came to London for the double purpose of screwing money out of my thrice-accursed brother, and disgracing myself and him at the same time; and I will do it too! I would have done it before now but that that fool of a woman sent me this money, which I mean to enjoy before I go to work. Pleasure first, business afterward with me. Go to the devil with your talk about my wife and my chee-ild! What is it to you? Are you sent as an emissary here from Tommy Goodboy? If you are, go back to him and tell him what my answer is: tell him I'll make his respectability blush yet, if I can not make his heart of pumice-stone feel."

"I never spoke a word to Mr. Lyndon in my life."

"Then perhaps you are an emissary from my wife. If you are, go back and tell her the best thing she can do is to leave me to myself."

"Listen to me, Mr. Lyndon, and don't waste on me all these rhapsodies and ravings. Keep them for somebody on whom they might produce some desirable effect. I assure you they move me only to sincere pity and contempt. I never knew until twenty minutes ago who you were, and I never cared. I spoke to you on no one's behalf, at no one's suggestion. I spoke to you only because I thought it hardly possible you could be wholly degraded below the feelings of average manhood. I find I was mistaken. That is enough. I leave you, and only hope we may not meet any more."

He threw himself into a chair, leaned back, and burst into a peal of mellow laughter. If I know any thing of reality as distinguished from acting—and I ought—this was no affectation or sham, but genuine, honest, hearty, irrepressible laughter. He rolled about in his chair, and stamped his feet, and shook his shoulders like a pigmy Sam Johnson in a fit of unconquerable mirth.

I stood up, angry, and ashamed of being angry—thinking what a great deal I would give, if I had it, to feel myself at liberty to kick him; and all the time considering whether I could in any possible way serve poor Lilla's interests by keeping on good terms with him.

"I protest, Temple," he said at last, when he was able to speak from very laughing, "you do delight me. As good as a play? Man, you're worth a whole season of broad comedy! To look at the expression of your face that time, to watch your gesture, to hear the earnest eloquence of your language, was the finest treat any man with a rich sense of humor could possibly have. You are the most delightful of young men—"

"And you are the most scandalous of old reprobates."

"Coarse, Temple, coarse, and not half so fervent as your graver style. But I see you are waxing wroth at being laughed at. Well, I dare say no one likes being laughed at, and of course the more ridiculous he is the less he likes being treated as such, and I really don't want to offend you; so let us consider the subject as dropped. Take a little more brandy? No? What, you are not going? Positively offended! Well, of all the idiots it has ever been my fortune to meet you are the most conspicuous. Get out! Go to all the devils! Confound you, I am a gentleman, and not a Christy's Minstrel like you! Insult a gentleman! By Jove! what's the world coming to?"

All these concluding sentences were rattled at my ears as I was descending the stairs. Until I had fairly quitted the house I could hear him swearing and objurgating. Then, as I passed under the window, I found that he was having recourse to the piano to cool his wrath. I paused a moment out of curiosity. He was singing, to his own accompaniment, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

I hurried away. The words, the sweet, pathetic, devotional tones, sounded in my ears like hideous blasphemy.

I walked slowly home, my mind occupied with the uncomfortable discovery I had made, and much perplexed to know whether there was any thing I could or ought to say or do with regard to it. It clearly seemed that I had no right to inflict useless torture on Mrs. Lyndon or Lilla by telling them any thing about my knowledge of this wretched man. From what he had over and over again told me it was certain that he had come to London for the purpose of shaming his brother into supplying him with new funds, and it was evident that there was no extravagant escapade or exposure of which the little wretch would not be capable. On the whole, then, it seemed to me that the best thing I could do would be to see Mr. Lyndon at once, and put him on his guard. Mr. Lyndon too might, like a sensible man of the world, feel inclined to buy off his disreputable brother even for Lilla's sake—to settle on him some pension on condition of his living out of England or out of Europe; and, disagreeable as the task would be, I would willingly undertake the work of negotiation and arrangement in order to ward off vexation and shame from these two poor women, who had been so kind to me. Yes, that was the best thing to do, and there was no time to be lost, as Mr. Lyndon would be leaving town immediately. My mind was made up. Little as I cared to obtrude myself on Lilla's uncle, I determined to see him, in this cause, next day.

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CHAPTER XIV.

AN ODD INTERVIEW AND AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

ARE there any poor people who never felt an impress of something like awe and timidity at their first direct contact with wealth? I have heard and read of noble, independent beings, serene in the unsurpassed and conscious dignity of mere manhood, who, in whatever poverty, never felt the faintest flutter of envy, awe, or humiliation when they stood for the first time in the presence of a great man's flunkeys, and asked to see the great man himself. Are there such persons? I don't say I disbelieve in their existence, but I should like to hear, on the authority of some one more skilled than I to penetrate the secrets of human consciousness, that there really are beings of that kind before I quite believe in them. My own impression is, that civilized man or woman of humble class hardly ever yet knocked for the first time at the door of a great West End mansion without a beating of the heart, a mingling of awe and humiliation. It is very mean and shabby and unworthy, and so are most of our instinctive impulses, which at last we school down, or are schooled and mastered by. Deep, deep down in our civilized nature is rooted the abject homage to wealth. I almost think it begins with the wearing of clothes. I doubt whether the very next stage of civilization after nakedness does not witness the internal growth of that servile sentiment. I think we keep singing our "A man's a man for a' that," and our "*Vilain et très-vilain*," in order to drown the feeling or exorcise it, as they play martial airs to keep up the manhood of the raw recruit. Of course we get over it sometimes; at least, thank Heaven, we do not all succumb to it wholly. I am not much of a sneak myself, and I never yet sought the patronage of a man of rank, or put myself in his way to get his nod, or bragged to my acquaintance that I had met him—and I know that I am no whit more independent than many of my neighbors—but I have felt the poor man's sentiment of awe for wealth; I have done to wealth the involuntary homage of being afraid, and hearing my heart beat, as I stood in its august, unfamiliar presence. Many of my friends are people connected somehow with the world of art, and who have made their way up from nothing. Some of them have fine West End houses now of their own, and carriages, and awful footmen in livery; but I think if I were talking confidentially with each of them in turn over a cigar and a glass of brandy-and-water, he would frankly admit that one of the most trying moments of his life—one of the moments when he found it hardest to keep up his dignity of independent and equal manhood—was just the first time when, having knocked at some great man's door, he waited for the opening of it and the presence of the flunkey.

Now I stood this Sunday morning at the door of Mr. Lyndon, M.P., and I realized these sensations. I had come to ask no favor—to seek no patronage—to bespeak no recognition—to pave the way for no acquaintanceship. If any thing, I was coming out of my regular beat of life rather to confer a favor than to solicit one; and yet I did feel that ignoble, nervous tremor which the unaccustomed presence of wealth inspires in the poor man, and which is the base image, the false coin, the bastard brother of the soul's involuntary homage to beauty and greatness. I knocked at the door, and, as I waited for its opening, I felt so nervous that I grew positively ashamed of myself, and took my courage in two hands, as the French phrase goes, and remembered about a man being a man for a' that.

Mr. Lyndon, M.P., lived in a fine house in Connaught Place, looking straight into Hyde Park. One had to go up high steps to get to the door, which lent additional majesty and dread to the business. It was, as I have said, a Sunday; and as I came hither I had passed crowds of people streaming out of the doors of fashionable churches, and seen splendidly dressed women, all velvets and satins and feathers, assisted into their carriages by footmen who carried gilded prayer-books; and I wondered whether Mr. Lyndon had been to church, and if so, whether he would have come back from his worship by the time I reached his house, and whether it was a dreadful heathenish sort of thing, a kind of outrage upon Church and State, to ask to see such a man at all on Sunday. To go to church, too, seemed, in presence of the splendid crowds, so necessary and becoming a part of respectability, that I felt like a social outlaw because I had not been there, and was not much in the habit of going there. My sensations were not the pangs of an awakened conscience, but the kind of feeling which goes through a man who, unshaved and with muddy boots, unconsciously intrudes into the midst of a well-dressed and elegant company.

When I found out Mr. Lyndon's house I wondered much why such a man, especially if he was in the habit of going to church, could not do something kind and substantial for his niece and his brother's wife, whose chief crime, poor thing, appeared to have been her inconvenient virtue; and why he would not at least take them out of poverty and debt, and the perpetual presence of temptation. This I was thinking when the door opened, and I stood in the presence of the great man's servant.

Well, it was not so dreadful after all. I really don't think I minded it in the least after the first sound of my voice. Mr. Lyndon at home?

Yes, Mr. Lyndon is at home. The servant seemed to say by his look of cold inquiry, "What then, young man? Admitting that Mr. Lyndon is at home, which it can't be worth while concealing from you, how can the fact in any way concern *you*?"

I mildly asked if I could see him.

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The man—who was civil enough, by-the-way—merely asked if I had an appointment; Mr. Lyndon did not usually see people unless by appointment. The pampered menial of a bloated aristocracy clearly assumed at the first glance that I was not a visitor, a friend of the family.

"Will you take in my card, and say I wish to speak a few words to Mr. Lyndon very particularly? I think he will see me."

Presently the servant came back and told me that if I would wait a few minutes Mr. Lyndon would see me. I was shown into a large, cold, handsome room, with the blinds down, and a conservatory at one side. A group of marble figures, nearly life-size, stood in front of the conservatory. They were the familiar Graces, and they were covered over with a shroud of very thick muslin; so thick, indeed, that the covering seemed put on less as a protection against dust and discoloration than as a veil to hide the nakedness of the classic women during the severely proper hours of Sunday service. I did not give much attention, however, to these marble forms; for my eyes were caught by an exquisitely framed photograph of large size, which stood, conspicuous, on the chimney-piece. It was the likeness of Christina—once my Christina, when she was poor and obscure, and we were both happy.

"Please to walk this way, Sir; Mr. Lyndon will see you."

I followed the servant across an echoing hall and into a library. At a desk in the centre, with letters and papers all about him, with Blue-books piled on the floor near his arm-chair, and on his other side a waste-paper basket overflowing with pamphlets, sat Mr. Lyndon, his eyes still fixed on some document he was reading.

He was a formal, rather handsome, close-shaven man, wearing the high stand-up collars which now are almost as rare as pig-tails. His thick hair was iron-gray; his complexion was fast purpling; his eyes, when he favored me by looking up, were much lighter than those of his brother or of Lilla—they were a cold, steely gray. I marked the rigid expression of his chin and jaw—it might have been cruelty, or it might have been stern virtue, according as you pleased to construe it; even in history and in action it is not always easy to distinguish the one from the other. In Mr. Lyndon's case I could not but think that the full, sensuous lips helped one a little to make the decision.

This, then, was Tommy Goodboy. I am bound to say that from the very first I took a dislike to Tommy Goodboy.

Mr. Lyndon left me for some seconds *planté là* without looking at me or speaking. I was, in fact, about to open the conversation, when he suddenly looked up with an air first of irritation, then of vacancy; then he looked down at my card, which was lying before him on his desk, and at last he spoke:

"Oh, Mr. Temple! Yes, I recollect now. My niece did speak to me about you, and I promised her that if I could do any thing—but I am sure I don't know. Why did you not come sooner—some time in the season, Mr. Temple? This is no time; and every body is out of town; and I am leaving town myself to-morrow; and, in fact, I am very busy to-day, and hardly counted on being disturbed. I don't usually see any body on Sundays; but as you have come—and I certainly did promise my niece to see you—"

"Excuse me, Mr. Lyndon. I have not come to remind you of your promise, or to ask any favor of you; indeed, I would accept none even if it were offered, although I feel deeply obliged to Miss Lyndon."

"To Miss Lyndon?"

"To your niece. Yes."

"Oh, to be sure—Lilla Lyndon, my niece. Well?"

"I don't mean to make any demand on your kindness, so far as I am concerned. I hope to be able to work my own way."

He merely bent his head, as a sort of formal acknowledgment.

"I have not come on any business of my own."

"Sent by my niece, I suppose?"

"No, Mr. Lyndon. She does not know any thing about my coming here."

He looked down at his papers, and glanced at his watch. The actions were significant; they said very plainly, "If you have any thing to say, say it at once, and go."

"I dare say you consider my visit an intrusion."

"Not at all. At least, that quite depends—"

"I have come about a matter which concerns you, or, at least, which I thought might possibly concern you."

He looked at me with cold surprise.

"I met lately, more than once in Dover, and here in London, a person whom I believe to be a member of your family—your brother, in fact."

He did start a little and wince as I gave him this piece of news.

"I was not aware that he had returned from abroad. Are you quite sure?"

"Quite sure; at least, he told me so. Indeed, I might have guessed the fact even without his telling me."

"Well, Sir, if you formed any acquaintanceship with the person you speak of—and I gather from your manner that you did—it would be superfluous to tell you that he is not a person whose return to England could give any pleasure to me or to any member of his family. That fact it would be idle for me to attempt to disguise. I did not know that he had returned to England, or expect his return, or desire to see him. You know, therefore, that you are the bearer of unwelcome news. The question I would ask is, why you have gratuitously taken on yourself the task of making the announcement. I suppose I need hardly say that if you are the bearer of any message, or request, or any thing of that sort from the person you speak

of, you could not possibly present yourself with worse credentials."

"I have no message or request, and I would not make myself the bearer of any. I assure you, Mr. Lyndon, I am no friend of your brother's. No member of his family—no, not his nearest relation—could feel less inclined for his society than I am. It is just because I think him so objectionable, and so offensive, and so reckless, that I have come here to-day."

"Well?"

"Your brother told me over and over again, before I knew his name, that he had come to England resolved to expose, and disgrace, and extort money from some one. I afterward learned—indeed, he told me—that you are the person against whom this is to be directed."

"He means to make some disgraceful exhibition of himself, to raise some scandal, in the hope of terrifying or shaming me into buying him off?"

"He does."

"He is quite capable of that, or of any thing else outrageous and—and, in fact, infamous."

"I have no doubt he is. He impressed me as being all but insane with hatred and recklessness."

"Ah! but he is not insane. It would be well for his family if he were. He is perfectly sane. Well, have you, then, come for the purpose of warning me?"

"No. Frankly, I tell you that I have not; at least, not on your own account."

"Listen to me, Mr. a—a—Temple. If you should see that person again, you may tell him that he can do his worst. I shall not buy him off—no, not by the outlay of a sixpence. It's very kind, no doubt, of you to take the trouble to come here, and all that; and of course you will understand me as expressing my sense of the obligation."

"Pray don't speak of that. I have not come out of any consideration for which you, Mr. Lyndon, personally have any reason to feel obliged. But—"

My speech was cut short by the entrance of the servant, who handed a card to his master. Mr. Lyndon looked at it, and said with emphasis: "Certainly. Let him wait; I shall be disengaged in less than one minute."

There was no mistaking this. I must come to the point, and make good use of my time.

"Mr. Lyndon, I have come quite of my own accord, and perhaps very foolishly, to ask you whether you would not do something in this unpleasant business for the sake of your niece. It is such a pity that a girl so young, and so poor, and—and—" I blurted out—"so pretty, should be liable to be tormented and disgraced by a man of that kind. Could you not make terms with him, and buy him off, for her sake and for her mother's? They have had so much unhappiness and poverty; and it's such a pity for poor Lilla."

"Mr. Temple, you appear to be so intimately acquainted with the personal history of some members of my family, that I don't suppose I add any thing to your stock of knowledge when I say that I have already done a good deal for my niece."

"Yes, I am aware of it. She has told me so often."

"And that she has no claim on me?"

"No claim but close relationship."

"That she has no claim on me except what I feel inclined to recognize. Now, I have no objection to Lilla herself; indeed, quite the contrary—I like her. But I am not going to be made the victim of all her relations. On that I am quite determined."

"If you could even take her away—to the country somewhere?"

"I am so little in the habit, Mr. Temple, of discussing my family affairs, even with members of my own family, that I really can not fall into the way of talking them over with strangers. Will you allow me again to thank you for the trouble you have taken in coming so much out of your way?"

"You, Mr. Lyndon, I have once more to say, are in no way indebted to me. I came only because I feel an interest in your sister-in-law and your niece. I fear I have done them little good by my unwelcome interference."

"You have done them, Sir, neither good nor harm."

He touched the bell that stood upon his table.

I hastened out of the room, without even going through the form of a parting salutation, which, indeed, would have been thrown away upon him, as he had already busied himself in his papers with a resolute manner, as if to announce to me that he would not look up again until I had relieved him of my unwelcome presence.

I was in no pleasant mood as I crossed Hyde Park. Especially was I out of humor with myself, even more than I was with Mr. Lyndon; and as before I had seen him I felt an unreasoning dislike to him, and as now that I had seen him and spoken with him I felt a deep detestation for him, it follows that I felt somewhat bitterly toward myself. I knew that I had made a fool of myself; that I had brought humiliation on myself; and that all this had been done to no purpose, or to an ill purpose. It takes a very brave and loyal nature to enable a man to be content with the knowledge that he has made a fool of himself, even when thereby he has benefited somebody; but it is gall and wormwood indeed to know that one has made a fool of himself, and at the same time frustrated instead of serving the object he wished to accomplish.

So I went, scowling and sullen, across the Park, mentally girding at myself and at the loungers and idlers I met in my way. I don't know why, when a man is in a vexed and sulky humor, he immediately begins to despise his fellow-creatures whom he may happen to meet, and to set them down as frivolous and worthless idlers, gilded butterflies, and so forth. I know that I visited, mentally, the pride and insolence

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of Mr. Lyndon upon every creature, man and woman, who passed me. Madame Roland in her maiden days, when snubbed by the aristocracy of her province, was not consumed by a fiercer flame of democratic passion than I felt that Sunday after I had been a victim to the insolence of the rich member of Parliament. I dare say if the people I scowled at in Hyde Park could only have known what was passing within my breast, many of them would have felt highly flattered and delighted. For the aristocrats Madame Roland detested were aristocrats. My aristocrats and pampered minions and gilded butterflies were in nine out of ten instances people very much of my own class of life, who had come out on the Sunday to see the riders and the carriages in the Row.

As I approached the Row a haughty aristocrat passed me rather closely. He was walking, like myself. It was like his insolence and the arrogance of his class! It was his affectation of indifference to saddle or carriage-cushion. He was a tall and, as well as I could see in a passing scowl, a handsome aristocrat. I flung upon him a glance of scorn. He eyed me rather curiously; he even turned back and looked steadily after me when he had passed. I too turned, and glared defiantly at him. He was, as I have said, tall—fully six feet high, I should say, with square, broad shoulders; he was dark-haired, and had a magnificent beard of curly, silky black. He was very well dressed—indeed, far too handsomely dressed for an aristocrat on a Sunday. He was not hurling back glances of scorn at me, but was scrutinizing me with a grave, earnest curiosity. He advanced a step, then fell back. I too advanced, a sudden light of recognition flashing on me. Then we approached each other rapidly and at once.

"Ned Lambert!" I exclaimed.

"Mr. Banks!" said my aristocrat. It was my old friend, the basso-carpenter.

Now that I came to study his appearance, he was not changed as to features or expression. He had grown much handsomer—he always was a good-looking fellow, remarkable for his fine eyes and his beard, but now he was strikingly handsome. He was splendidly built—stately as a guardsman, supple as a gymnast. He had still the grave, modest, genial expression which was so attractive about him in the old days. He was only too well dressed; for as one came to look at him attentively there was something about him which seemed a little out of keeping with the clothes. Perhaps if I had not known of his origin and his bringing-up, I might never have noticed this; as it was, I thought I could detect the outlines and the movements of the young workman under the broadcloth, the shiny hat, the fawn-colored trowsers, the lavender kid gloves.

We were very cordial in a moment. Really it was kind of him to walk with me just there and then; I was so very carelessly, not to say shabbily, dressed. My old friend and foe did not seem to care.

"You have been in London long, Mr. Banks?" asked Lambert.

I told him how many years.

"So long, and we never met all that time! I've been away a good deal; but still it is odd that we should both have been knocking about London so much and never met."

He soon told me all about himself. He was an organ-builder, and was holding a very good position in a great house. He had himself invented and introduced some improvements into the construction of the instruments, and though these were not important enough to bring him fame or money, yet they gave him consideration with his employers and their patrons; and he looked forward to an ultimate, perhaps not a very distant, partnership. He had been sent to many foreign cities to represent his principal and superintend the building and putting up, the repairing and improving, of organs. He had been to the United States; he had been in St. Petersburg, and Moscow, and Stockholm; he was quite familiar with Rome, and Paris, and Madrid. He had lived ever so many lives, while I had been vegetating by the Lethean wharf of the Thames's stodgy banks. I felt myself very small indeed as he talked to me. For me, my story was told in two words: *Me voici.*

There was one subject we both seemed to avoid, yet surely we both were anxious to approach it. We sometimes beat about it; in this way, for example:

"You have been in London all lately—for the most part, I mean, Mr. Banks?"

"For the most part, yes. No, though; I was down in the provinces a good deal all the summer."

"But you were in town some part of the season—of the opera season?"

"Some part of it; not lately. I only came back to town a few days ago."

He wanted to know if I knew all about Christina. But I shrank back as yet. It came on in another way. He insisted that I must go and dine with him. He lived out St. John's Wood way.

"Are you married, Lambert?"

"No." He spoke very slowly. "No, Mr. Banks, I am not married, and I am not likely to be. I don't see what I want marrying. And you—perhaps you are married?"

"No. I may take up your own words—I am not married, Ned Lambert, and I am not likely to be. I don't see what I want marrying. And you know the reason why."

"Ah!" He breathed hard, looked at me with a stolen glance of kindness, curiosity, and pity; but he said no more.

"Have you seen *her*, Lambert?" I broke out at last, and I drew him aside under a clump of trees. "Have you seen her?"

I did not name her name—what need to pronounce it?

"Yes; oh yes, I've seen her."

"Lately?"

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"Lately, and before, and always. I may say; at least, often."

"You have been seeing her—you have been meeting her all this time?"

"Yes; off and on, that is. When I could, and where I could."

Almost a cry of agony and anger escaped from my lips. All this time, all these years, while I had been groping in the desolation of solitude and darkness, he had known of her whereabouts, had watched her, and spoken with her, and been familiar with her! And faithfully served her, no doubt! I suppose the fierce light of jealousy and anger flamed in my eyes, for he at once said, gently and firmly:

"For what I think you mean, Mr. Banks, it was little good to me to see her and speak to her. I tell you honestly, and like a man, I did my very best to make her love me; and I couldn't succeed. I tell you, too, I was mean enough to try to serve her and help her when she wanted help, and to hope to work on her gratitude in that way; and it was of no use. She told me so at last; and then I tried to make up my mind as a man to be her friend, and no more; and I have been trying, and I think I've been succeeding even; and I fancy I'm growing better, and able to bear it, and to think of her only as a friend. Now I'll not deny that this meeting with you, and bringing back the old times, and talking of her with *you*, may have thrown me back a little. But I'll get up again, please God, and get over it. I'm determined to get over it, and to be satisfied and happy to be her friend. So you need not feel any thing like anger at *me*. I have done you no harm, and myself no good."

Need I deny that a glow of wild and futile delight passed through me? It passed soon away; Lambert's ill success was but little gain to me.

"You say you have always been seeing her; where, for instance?"

"In London, here, first of all; and in Paris, and in Milan, and in Russia. And Paris again, when she made her great success there. And here, the other day, when she came out and carried all before her. *I* was there. I hoped to be able to throw her her first bouquet; but, good Lord, there was such a shower of bouquets came down that mine must have been lost among them!"

"One word, Lambert. Did she never—did she never speak—of me?"

"Not much; very little indeed. I didn't ask her any questions. I didn't know how you came to be separated, and I don't know now; and I don't ask you, either, any thing about it. I tell you, however, that I thought badly of you at first; but afterward I thought I must have done you wrong."

"Why, Lambert, why?"

"Because, from some words she once let fall, I thought she had made up her mind not to let any thing stand between her and success on the stage; and I thought—although she never hinted such a thing in the least—I thought—well, I don't quite like to say it."

"Speak it out, man! Nothing that can be said by any human creature can hurt me more."

"Well, I thought that she had thrown you over."

"So she did, Lambert. She threw me over, as you say—she left me suddenly. I never knew why; and I have never seen her since. I ought to hate her and curse her, and I can not."

"No, no, you ought not to hate her. I don't understand her—I never quite could; but if I know any thing about her, and if she ever loved any one, I think she loved you."

"Did she not speak of me lately—when last she was here?"

"Yes, she did; that was, indeed, almost the only time. I went to see her up in Jermyn Street just the day before she left, and she asked me if I knew that you were living in London; and of course I didn't know; how could I? London is the grave of provincial friendships."

"Well, and she—"

"She told me you were living in London, and that she believed you were very happy."

"And did she so calmly, so readily believe that I was happy? Did she cast me from her mind without a word of regret?"

"No, not without a word of regret; at least, I ought not to say regret, perhaps, for she said she was glad that you were happy."

"O God!"

"And she said I might perhaps meet you after she was gone, and, if I did, to give you her remembrances and her good wishes."

"That was all?"

"That was all—all she said, at least. I know what I thought at the time."

"Tell me what you thought. Don't spare me, Lambert; tell me any thing—all."

"Then I'll tell you what I thought. I saw how pale she grew, and heard how her voice quivered, and I envied you; for I thought, 'For all that's come and gone, whatever is the reason of the separation, she thinks of him and loves him still.'"

"No, Lambert, you are mistaken; you do not understand her. No, she never loved me—never. She never cared a rush for me compared with her ambition. She despises me now because I have come to nothing so far. She pities me, I dare say, and would fling me an alms if she might; but she rejoices that she had the good sense and the good fortune to free herself from me."

Lambert shook his head.

"I don't quite understand her," he said; "but somehow I think I understand her better than you do. I know well enough how ambitious she is, and fond of admiration and applause and success, and all that; and how proud she is of having pushed her way up and up, from being a poor little girl unknown to be the star that she is. I don't think she would let any

thing stand in the way of her success much. But you know as well as I that human nature sounds more than one stop; and *hers* has many. And I think there is much love in her heart too, as I know there is much friendship; and I don't believe she has ever forgotten you or ceased to love you. There, it costs me something, I can tell you, to speak these words, and I shall have to smoke away very fiercely for half the night to get over this; but I think it's true. I don't know that it's any good telling you, either; for, mind, I don't say that it could come to any thing now, even if you were to meet her."

"No, it could come to nothing. Don't think me an idle braggart or a fool, Lambert, or that I am talking after the fashion of the fox and the grapes; but if she stood there and held out her hand to me, and—and—offered to marry me, I would turn away from her and leave her. I would, though I love her now as much as ever—ay, far more than ever."

Lambert again shook his head, and smiled—a melancholy smile.

"No, you wouldn't," he said. "If she stood at the other side of that pathway, and held out her hand and beckoned you to come, you'd come if all the promises and vows and vengeances, and saints and angels and devils, held you back. I know that *I* would, and couldn't help myself; and I know that you would too."

"It will never be tried, Lambert."

"No, it will never be tried. She has gone away for a good long time. She told me that, no matter what offers she might get, she would not come to London next season. She was thinking of going to the States and South America; they are very greedy of new singers now in Brazil. And before she comes back we don't know what may have happened."

"She will probably marry."

"Perhaps. And you may have recovered, and may be married too."

"No; whatever may be possible, that is not. A word or two more, Lambert. Did you know of any one who seemed likely to marry her?"

"Likely, no; would have liked to marry, yes. No doubt the number of candidates will begin to increase considerably now."

"Ay, I dare say it will. Did you know any Italian, any musical man, who took her up and helped to bring her out, and who was fond of her?"

"I didn't know him; but she often told me of him. It was he to whom she owes much of her success; so she says, at least; but I don't think much of that, for her voice and her talents would have won their way some time or other. But I believe he made the way very smooth for her in the beginning, and quite took her under his care, and was better to her than many brothers or fathers could have been. She always speaks of him with great regard; in fact, with a sort of devotion."

"Was he—is he, do you think, in love with her?"

"I suppose so," said Lambert, slowly, and speaking rather ruefully. "Why not he as well as you and I, and all the rest of us?"

"Do you think that she—"

"No, I don't. I know what you were going to ask, and I really don't. I am sure she is very much attached to him, you know, and all that; and I don't say that if she were to marry for any thing but love she might not marry him out of pure gratitude. But when I spoke to her once about him she was a little angry at first, and said I ought to know better; and then she softened and smiled, and went on to say that in any case his heart had two great loves already—music and Italian revolution—and there was no place left in it for any woman."

"He is older than she is?"

"Yes; I should say ten or a dozen years at least. But that's nothing, you know; he is not old enough to be her father."

Lambert had a painfully direct and honest way of extinguishing any hope which he might perchance have lighted. I winced under his last few simple and practical words.

Another point I was anxious to be informed upon.

"Tell me, Lambert, do you know any body named Lyndon, who knows her?"

"Lyndon, the member for Laceham, the man who lives over in Connaught Place there? Yes, of course I know him; that is, I know all about him. In fact, I know him in the way of my own business, and I have heard of him through her."

"I don't mean him, though I am interested in knowing something about him too. I mean another Lyndon who knows *her*, and says he helped her forward at the beginning."

(Christina's name had never once been mentioned in our conversation. We only spoke of *her*.)

Lambert shook his head.

"No, I don't know any other Lyndon but the one; and I don't like him. He is a purse-proud, self-conceited, egotistic, unscrupulous man. He has all the proud airs of a born swell, though his father, I hear, made his money in the pork trade at the time of the French war."

"But he was, and is, very friendly to *her*?"

"Yes, he was and is. I don't like his friendship—I suppose it is because I don't like *him*; but I hate to hear of his being near her."

"Well, that is not the man I mean. The Lyndon I speak of helped in some way, or says he did, to introduce her first to the Italian you have told me of; and he wrote to her lately, or says he did, for some money, and she sent it."

"Oh, *that* fellow? Yes, there is such a fellow: I believe he did, quite in a chance sort of way, meet her long ago, and he was a sort of musical jackal whom the Italian employed to discover fresh and promising voices for him; and in that way he introduced them. Yes, he did write her a begging-letter lately, and she sent him money—with a liberal hand, I dare say. He is an unfortunate scoundrel, I believe. But *his* name is not Lyndon."

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"He told me it was; and I believe, in that one instance, he spoke the truth."

"Perhaps so. But it certainly is not the name he went by—that she knew him by. He is a sort of fellow who probably has a whole stock of names, a perfect assortment to choose from."

We said no more on the subject then. I walked with Lambert to St. John's Wood, where he lived. A beggar would have been interesting to me just now if he came from my old home, and was in any way associated with my old life; and Ned Lambert I had always liked since the time of our memorable battle on the strand, that dark night when, falling and fainting, I awoke with my head in Christina's lap. We were, somehow, rowing in the same boat too, and were no longer rivals. Life seemed brighter for me now that I had met him. Since I came to London, seven or eight years ago, I had never spoken with or even seen any one who came from the old home. That whole passage of my life seemed gone and dead. A great sea had risen up and swallowed the green, delicious island under whose palm-trees I had sat happy and idle so long. It was a strange delight now, on this hard gray shore, to meet at length with one who, like me, was once a tenant of the lost home. I felt that I must be Lambert's friend.

His manner seemed to return the feeling. He was always rather a diffident sort of fellow, slow of speech, and he had not much changed in that respect. Indeed, I noticed one peculiarity about him which rather added to his natural diffidence and slowness of speech. He was conscious of his want of early education, at least in manner and speech, and he was always on the watch to correct any error of tongue, or to prevent himself from making any. Therefore he pronounced every word slowly and cautiously, somewhat after the manner of a foreigner feeling his way into our language; and he lingered with a slight emphasis over words which an uneducated man would be likely to pronounce incorrectly, as if in order to leave no doubt that he was pronouncing them correctly. Sometimes he went a little wrong in an aspirate or an "*r*," and I observed that when he did so he always went back deliberately over the word and said it correctly, as one brings a horse up to a fence again and makes him go clean over it when he has failed in jumping it properly the first time. He was always fond of reading and thinking; when a mere young carpenter his stock of book-knowledge seemed wonderfully out of proportion with his class and his manner. Now he had added to this, and doubtless to new stores of reading gathered since, all the vast and varied experiences accumulated during travel through many countries by a keen, observant eye, and a robust, intelligent mind. I could see easily enough through his simple, modest pride in his own advancement and experiences. I could see clearly that, in his quiet, manly way, he was resolved on being a gentleman in appearance and manner, as he surely was in mind, and that he was training himself for the task. There was so much about him that was strong and self-reliant, that this little trait of weakness or vanity was a softening, childlike peculiarity which made one like the man all the better.

Some thought of this kind made me fancy that it would rather please Lambert if I were to make a slight allusion to his improved position and changed appearance, and I took occasion to remark on the fact of my not having recognized him at once when we met.

"Do you know, Lambert, that I was rather in a cynical and fiercely-democratic mood when I passed you, and I positively scowled at you, believing you to be a bloated aristocrat?"

"No; did you, though?" he replied, blushing over his dark face like a great girl.

"Positively I did. Did you not see my scowl?"

"Yes; I did notice somebody looking rather sharply and oddly at me. That first attracted my attention. Then I looked, and I recognized you at once. But you did not seem to know me, or to be inclined to recognize me."

"How could I recognize you at once? You have grown such a swell."

"Have I really? Did I really look at all like—well, like what people call a gentleman? You may laugh at me if you like; but I should very much wish you to tell me the truth."

"As I have told you, I scowled at you as you passed, out of my detestation for born aristocrats."

"Poor born aristocrats!" said Lambert, smiling, "their privileges of birth don't seem of much use when fellows like me could be mistaken, even for a moment, for one of them. Do you know that I am silly enough to be gratified when you tell me of the mistake, although I know very well that the second glance showed you what an error it was? But I don't think it's any shame for a man to try to educate himself in manner, and I am always trying it. It was a dreadful task at first. When I got to know a few people, and became noticed a little as a man who had some new notions about organ-building, and all that, and one or two really great musicians were very kind and friendly to me, it used to be a dreadful trial to have to observe how people came into a room, and sat and talked, and used their knives and forks at dinner, and drank the right wine out of the right glass, and all the rest of it. The first time I went to an evening party in a white tie and a dress-coat was an agony, I can tell you. And then to have to watch one's *h*'s and *r*'s all the time did so intensify the misery. For a long time I acquired a positive reputation for sententiousness because I used to plan out little remarks and replies which should say as much as possible in the fewest words, and should have none of the dangerous words in them. I am getting better now, I think. But to this hour I am afraid of that cursed letter *h*; and when

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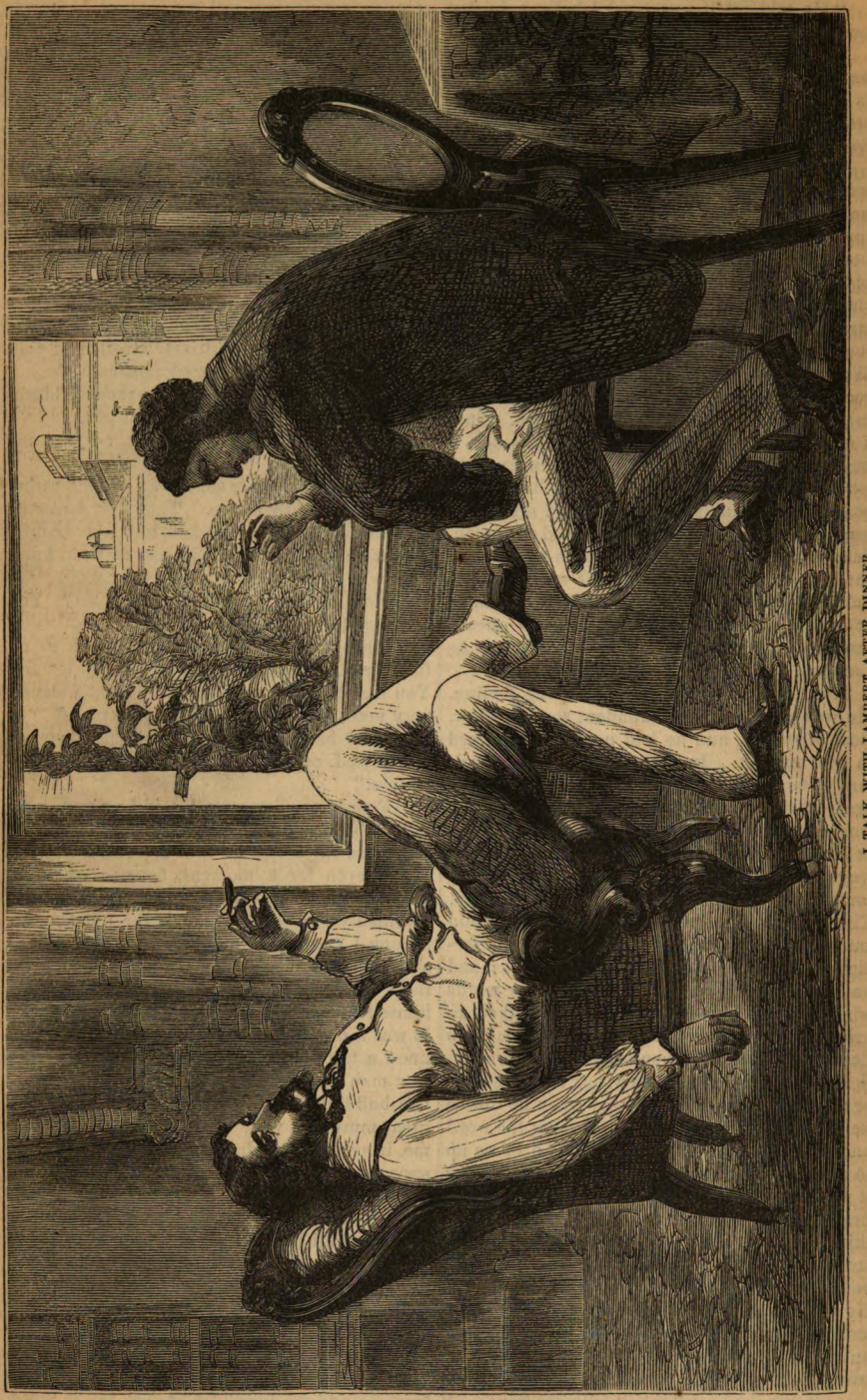

I TALK WITH LAMBERT AFTER DINNER.

I find that I must encounter it, I fall back and have a look at it mentally first, so as to be quite sure that I know what to do with it. Do you know that I feel infinitely more happy and at my ease talking French on the Continent, or with foreigners here, than speaking English with Englishmen? Because, you know, a wrong accent, or even a slip of grammar, isn't any

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thing with an Englishman speaking French, but it does so stamp an Englishman talking English. And I am so conscious of my own defects."

"Far too conscious, Lambert; never mind your defects. It may comfort you to hear that I know a man, a literary man and a scholar, too—to be sure, he is an Irishman—who says that he never yet met or heard an Englishman who did not, some time or other, go wrong with his *h*, or sound an *r* where the cynical letter had no business to come."

"Ah, but there are degrees. There's an almost imperceptible lapse made once in a twelvemonth, and there's a blunder that would be always coming out if one didn't keep close watch over it. No; you don't know what it is never to have been at school, never to have been taught when young how to pronounce a word, or enter a room, or properly handle a knife and fork. Teaching one's self Latin, or even Greek, is comparatively easy—I've done something that way; but studying the ways of polite society alone out of a printed book of etiquette is cruel work;" and Lambert laughed genially.

"Then you shall teach it all to me, Lambert, now that you have mastered the art, for I fear I never could grapple with it alone."

"No; *you* don't want it. With you it's quite different, for you have been at school, and you have always been mixing with people. You have no idea how different is the case of a fellow who goes into any thing like society for the first time, and finds himself new to the very clothes he wears, not to speak of the ways of the people he meets. I wonder a man ever has the perseverance to go through with it. Many a time I thought it really was not worth the labor and trouble. But I suppose it's something like cigar-smoking—it's sickening at first, and it takes a long practice before one can get quite used to it and enjoy it; but at last one suddenly finds he can't do without it."

Talking this way we reached pleasant St. John's Wood, and the house in which Lambert lived. It was a pretty, fantastic little house, one of a terrace which stood upon the sort of almost imperceptible rise that in the suburbs of London men call a hill. Lambert had the first-floor of the house, and enjoyed a very pretty view over the outskirts of London; the windows being so placed as not to overlook the vast cluster of streets and spires and domes, fog-surmounted, which lay below. Looking from the room, one might at times catch faint, hazy glimpses of something like the country. Flowers in profusion grew on the patches of garden in front and back of the house; trailing plants fell from eaves to basement. It was altogether a very pleasant, gracious, and tempting place, and I thought Lambert might well feel glad to return to such a nest every evening from the town.

The rooms were neatly furnished; for the most part, of course, the regular furniture—chimney-glass, ornaments, pictures—of suburban lodgings in London. But there was a small organ, hardly bigger than a piano, of my friend's own design and construction, with some of his special and newest improvements; and there were some clever specimens of wood-carving, which he made a frequent recreation, he told me; and there were books of his own—books on carving, on music, on science, Greek Lexicons and class-books; and there was a photograph over the chimney-piece which caught my eye the moment I went into the room: it was that of Christina.

Lambert took a book—a sort of scrap-book, apparently—out of a drawer of his writing-desk, and, turning hastily over its leaves, called my attention to it.

"Critiques of *her*," he said; "I used to watch for them in the papers, and cut them out and paste them in."

Yes; there were criticisms of her performances from the *Moniteur*, and the *Débats*, and the *Indépendance Belge*, and the *National-Zeitung* of Berlin, and the *Ost-Deutsche Post* of Vienna, the *Pungolo* of Milan, the *Osservatore* of Rome, the *Opinione* of Turin, the *Courrier Russe*, the *Times*, the *Morning Chronicle* (there *was* a *Morning Chronicle* then), the *Morning Post*, and I know not what other papers. I glanced over them. Often, indeed, the letters danced and flickered before my eyes. I read them with amazement, with pride, with delight—ah, and with selfish shame and pain as well! They differed as to minor points of criticism—some extolling as a special charm what others deprecated as the one sole defect; some declaring that the voice was incomparable, but the singer had yet much to learn; others insisting that the skill of the musician conquered some vocal defects; others, again, leaning more on the acting than on the singing. But all rang to the one grand chime—success. In Berlin the students of the university had a serenade by torch-light in honor of their gifted countrywoman; in enthusiastic and music-mad St. Petersburg the singer was presented, on the occasion of her last performance, with a coronet of gold and a diamond brooch. So on. It was simply success. Christina had succeeded.

I put the book away, and sat thinking and silent for a few moments. The whole thing was unreal to me; I was as one who dreams. Only the other day it seemed when she called to me a farewell from her window, and the flower she had worn in her bosom fell on the pavement at my feet.

I rose and went to the chimney-piece, and looked calmly at her portrait. She had developed, but not much changed. The photograph made her look a little older, perhaps, than I could have expected; but most photographs have that sort of effect. She was certainly very beautiful, and of a beauty which was in no sense commonplace. In a portrait-gallery filled with the pictures of handsome women—most of them even of handsomer women—one must, I thought, be attracted at once by tha

striking face, with its fleece of fair hair and its eyes so large and dark, and the singular softness and sweetness—almost a sensuous sweetness—of the expression on the lips and the outlines of cheek and chin, contrasting as strangely as did the hue of the hair and eyes with the energy and decision which the forehead and brows expressed.

I looked at it long and silently, compressing my lips the while, and crushing, with such force of self-control as I could command, all rising emotion down into obedience. But I might have allowed my feelings their full sway without fear of observation, for Lambert had quietly left the room the moment he saw me approach the photograph. He did not return for some minutes. I conjectured that he would not return, in fact, until I had given some audible intimation that I needed no longer to be alone. I sat down and played a few random chords on his organ. He presently came in, looking animated and cheerful, and told me he must apologize for having left me, but that he had been compelled to have a long and profound consultation with his landlady on the subject of dinner. Dinner came at last, and we drank some wine, and became very talkative and cordial and friendly. By a sort of silent agreement we avoided all reference to past times, and said no more of *her*.

After dinner we opened the windows, lighted cigars, and smoked. Lambert told me, with the innocent, boyish pride which was rather an attractive part of his character, that he was the only lodger ever allowed to smoke in that sacred room; that the landlady, a most respectable old lady, positively insisted that he must have his cigar there whenever he pleased; and that, whenever he was leaving the place for good, he meant to present her with a set of entirely new curtains.

"It wouldn't be any use my giving them before," he added; "I should only spoil them, and she would benefit nothing by the transaction."

The evening was calm and sultry, as we sat quietly smoking. Presently I saw Lambert get up and grasp the collar of his coat with one hand, while he looked inquiringly at me.

"Would you mind," he asked, "if I were to—" and he stopped.

"Mind what?" I asked in my turn, not having the least idea of what he meant.

"Well, just to pull off my coat, you know. It's very hot this evening, and the fact is I haven't got rid of all the old ways yet. It does seem so pleasant still to sit of a Sunday evening in one's shirt-sleeves. I am gradually breaking myself of the fashion; but just now I begin to feel so very comfortable that, if you really *didn't* mind, and wouldn't be at all offended—I have a dressing-gown, you know, and rather a handsome one; but still it isn't quite the same thing, just yet."

I could not help laughing; but he was quite grave and earnest.

"Sit in your shirt-sleeves, by all means, Lambert, if it makes you comfortable," I said. "My poor father was a boat-builder, as you know, in his best days, and he always used to like to sit in his shirt-sleeves of a Sunday evening; but I think my mother discouraged and finally abolished the practice in him, and she never allowed me even to attempt it. Therefore I have an enjoyment the less, you see, and I rather envy you your additional comfort."

So Lambert pulled off his coat, and lay with his lithe, long, manly figure back in his armchair, and chatted with additional freedom and fluency all the evening.

The night passed pleasantly, and it was time for me to go. Ned insisted on walking part of the way with me, and did in fact walk nearly all the way. We made arrangements, of course, to meet again, and meet often. He inquired gently and cautiously into my prospects, and hinted in the most delicate manner that he might perhaps be able to give me some advice, or to make me acquainted with somebody whose advice would be better than his. I opened to him freely whatever plans, prospects, and hopes I had.

"One thing," I said, "I am resolved on, Lambert. I will make a way and a place for myself, and in opera. I *will* be a *primo tenore* one day; I will sing with *her*, and she shall acknowledge that I have something in me; or I will find a way of dying, if it has to be by a plunge from Waterloo Bridge." We shook hands and separated.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HEAVY FATHER'S MISTAKE.

My parting words to Lambert expressed not too strongly a resolution which had grown up in my mind. I was resolved to slave, and strive, and wear myself out, if need be, in order to qualify myself for success in opera, that I might once sing with her, perhaps on equal terms. All other objects in life seemed to be as nothing compared with that—thus to triumph, thus to prove myself not unworthy of the opinion she once held of me—and then come what might!

Strangely enough, this determination was not inspired by any hope that we might fulfill the other part of our early dreams, and be married. I do not think such a hope ever entered into my ambition and my resolve. She did not love me; it was only too evident that she could not really have loved me at any time as I would have been loved; and even were it probable or possible that the far-off date of my success could find her still unmarried, I was too proud to think of courting the love of one who had flung me thus away, and left me to my loneliness and my misery. No, passionate as was my futile love for her, it was not that which now influenced me to my determination and my hopes. It was the absorbing desire to

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prove myself not unworthy, not all a failure. To wring that compensation from Fate was now my one sole object in life.

And if I should fail?

Well, I was no idiot, and I thought of that. The most passionate aspiration can not conquer success, nor is it evidence of capacity for success, unless when it comes as a mere instinct of the nature, like the desire of the water-fowl for the pool, of the young eagle for the flight. I therefore laid little stress on my own mere aspirations, knowing well how greatly they were stimulated by my love and my wounded pride. So I contemplated coolly the possibility, the chance, of utter failure, and I resolved upon my course. Once let it be certain, let it be beyond all doubt—and I felt convinced I could judge my own cause impartially and rightly—that I was a failure, and I would withdraw instantly and forever from these countries, change my name, bury myself in some remote western region of America, and live there, a hewer of wood and drawer of water, till my life should come to an end.

I have said thus much in explanation of the resolute energy with which I now went to work at musical training, and at saving up money with which to go to Italy and improve myself, and begin a career there which I hoped might wake an echo in England. My friend Lambert entered quietly, earnestly into all my plans, calmly assuming my perseverance and my success as a matter of course; and he lent me valuable assistance by advice and suggestion. Lilla, too, was in our full confidence, and was quite delighted with the project, frequently reminding me of the magnificent day at the Derby she was to have the first season of my London success. Weeks and months went on, and I began at last to see Italy in the near fore-ground of my hopes.

Before I proceed to sum up in a few lines one tolerably long chapter of my life—a chapter as quiet and uneventful to tell of as it was to me momentous—I must relate two incidents.

I went very often to see Ned Lambert; he very often came to see me. He made himself very friendly and familiar with Lilla and her mother. He would sit for hours listening to the poor old woman telling him of her trials and her disappointments, her feats of cooking, her new and incomparable methods of applying sauce and preserving peaches, Lilla's sicknesses and Lilla's charms. I don't believe there was an ailment Lilla had had, from her first "thrush" to her latest toothache, of which Edward Lambert did not hear many times, and seemingly with profoundest interest, the full details. Lilla herself used to grow dreadfully impatient under these narratives, and I observed, not without curiosity and interest, that she was far less enduring now than she used to be when I was the spell-bound victim.

Often, therefore—indeed, whenever I could—I intercepted Mrs. Lyndon, flung myself in her path, and engaged her in colloquial battle, in order that Lambert might be saved, and that he might, if he liked, have all the time with Lilla to himself. I thought his eyes rested sometimes fixedly and tenderly on her when he was not near her, with an expression as if he would gladly be beside her; and I was quite willing to give him the full opportunity, so far as I could bring it about. Soon, too, I began to observe that Mrs. Lyndon watched with somewhat uneasy glances when these twain talked too closely and too long together, and that the pleasure of expatiating to an unresisting, patient listener like myself lost some of its charm under such circumstances. These were symptoms, omens perhaps, not to be overlooked.

One fine starry night of winter, when the hardened snow gleamed glassy on the ground, and the lighted clock of Chelsea Hospital showed brightly through the clear and rarefied air, I walked part of the way home with Lambert from our quarter by the Thames. He was unusually silent for a while, then suddenly said:

"I say, Temple" (he had got into the way now of calling me Temple, and not Banks), "what a very pretty girl your friend Miss Lyndon is!"

"Very pretty, and very clever, and very good."

"Yes, she seems a sort of girl that could understand a fellow, and help him to think, and bring him out. Do you know, I talked to her just now of some new ideas I have got—good ideas, I think; in my own line, of course—and she listened to me all the time, and quite understood it all and cared about it. I know she did by the questions she asked. Never mind the answers a girl gives. I don't; they're no test. Some girls will know by the mere expression of your face, if they haven't even been listening to a word, what kind of answers they ought to give. But the questions—if they venture upon questions—that's the real test. You can't mistake, if you have a question asked. You know at once just how far she has gone with you, and how far she is able to go. Well, Sir, that girl asked me one or two questions that showed she had got rather ahead of me. She did indeed. I'm rather a slow fellow, and she seemed to make a short-cut—to cut off the angle, you know, and get to the end directly. It must be very pleasant," he added, with a sort of half sigh, "to have a woman for a friend—for a friend—who can understand one in that ready sort of way."

Was the inconsolable becoming consoled?

"It must be very pleasant, Lambert," I answered, in deep earnestness. "It is a pleasure some of us must go without, and go darkling through life for want of it."

"She does not seem very happy there, I think," he remarked, with a nod of his head in the direction we had left.

"No. They are, as you know, very poor."

"Yes. If ever I marry, it shall be some poor girl, who will have no fortune to thro

in my face, but will owe all to me. I hate the idea of benefiting by one's wife. I'd like to make my way in the world myself, and bring her along with me; and you know I have not been doing badly so far."

"Lilla and her mother have both been very kind and good to me. I only wish I had any way of proving my friendship and gratitude."

"Is there not a ready and suitable way?"

"*Is* there? If there is, I don't know it."

"Marry Lilla." He brought out the words very slowly.

"My dear fellow, you don't know what you are talking about."

"Yes, I do; I quite understand why you can not think of such a thing."

"No, you don't; at least, you only know part of the reason. If I had never met another woman I should not wish to marry Lilla Lyndon. I am very fond of her, Lambert, and have good reason to be; but not in that way. My feeling in the matter, however, is not much to the purpose. Something a good deal more to the point is that Lilla Lyndon would not marry me."

"Do you think not? Now I have often thought—"

"Because you don't know. To begin with, my prospects are all too cloudy, and I am far too poor. Lilla Lyndon does not pretend to be a heroine, and I don't believe she could be happy in poverty. She must marry somebody who can make her mother and herself comfortable, or more than merely comfortable; and I don't blame her for it."

"Yet I don't think—I am sure I am right—that she would marry for money. I think there is something better in her."

"And so do I of late. I don't believe now that she would marry for money; but I don't think she would go into married poverty—love in a garret, and that kind of thing. And I say again I don't blame her. Some people can do it, and others can't. Let us all try to understand ourselves and our capacities. One person can stand the night-air without catching cold, and another can not; but there are some who run the risk which they might have avoided, and do catch cold, and are moping and cross about it for weeks after. Others know they can not stand it, and take care not to try; and they are wise. Now, I suppose there are plenty of girls who have just courage enough to take the plunge, but not courage to bear the consequences without regret and lamentation. I think Lilla Lyndon knows that she has had enough of poverty in her domestic life, and she has sense enough to caution her against risking any more of it. She is not fit for the kind of life she leads, and I think it has gone near to spoiling her. A very little of a better sort of existence would soon lift her quite out of the contamination of this."

"So it would," said Lambert, eagerly. He had been listening with rather a depressed air to my exordium against poverty.

"The fact is, Lambert, they talk dreadful rubbish about the blessings of poverty. It is all very well for preachers and philosophers to try to gammon people into making the best of a bad lot; but there is a sort of poverty which does nothing but degrade. All Lilla Lyndon wants, to be just as good a girl as ever lived, is a certain income, and ease, and no debts."

Lambert brightened, I thought, under these words. The fact is, I began to perceive that I had been producing, unconsciously, quite a wrong impression. When I was lecturing on the evils of poverty, I only meant to show him how certain little levities and defects had probably arisen in Lilla's character, and thus to encourage him to pay court to her, if he felt so inclined. To me he appeared quite a rising and prosperous man, and every word I used as an argument against Lilla's marrying into poverty was meant as a reason why she ought to marry him. I was fast turning match-maker out of interest in both my friends. But Lambert at first thought I was arguing against the prudence of any body thinking of such a girl as Lilla unless he was a man of fortune, and his countenance, transparently expressive, became clouded. It cleared again as he said:

"Then you don't think she would care about a man only if he was a swell, and had plenty of money, and a house in the West End, like her uncle, and all that?"

"No; I think she is too sensible and spirited a girl to throw away a chance of real happiness for dreams."

"You see, Temple, it's this way with me. I suppose a man can't always live alone. At least, I think now he can't; I used to fancy it would be my fate, and that it was the only thing I could endure under—in fact, under the circumstances, you know. Now, somehow, I don't think so, since I've seen that girl's bright face, and heard her pleasant laugh. And I think there's something in her too—I know it. I don't think I've fallen in love with her; perhaps I've passed the age for that sort of thing, and I've knocked about a good deal, and I'm not far off thirty years old. But I do like to be near her, and to hear her talk; and I think she could brighten a man's life very much. Then I'm getting on very well—for a fellow like me, that is, who came up from nothing; and if things don't take a wonderfully bad turn, I don't see why I shouldn't soon be able to keep my wife quite like a lady—and Lilla Lyndon would look like a lady too, and take the shine out of some of the West Enders, I can tell you."

"My dear fellow, I wish you good luck and God-speed with all my heart."

"Yes, that's all very fine, but we mustn't go too fast; I haven't the faintest reason to know that she would listen to a word of the kind."

"Nor I; but I don't know any reason why she shouldn't."

"Don't *you* know any reason?"

"Not I. How should I?"

"Unless that, perhaps—she knows you a long

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time, you see, and you have been a good deal together, almost like brother and sister."

"Exactly, Ned; there it is — we are very much like brother and sister, and never could or would be like any thing else. Lilla Lyndon has not a friend on earth who thinks more of her than I do, and I'm sure I have no friend more warm and true than she—no friend, indeed, half so warm and true. And that is all; and if Lilla should marry you, old fellow, which I sincerely hope, she and I will be just the same fast friends as ever, please God."

We parted without many more words—without any more words, indeed, upon this subject. But it seemed clear enough to me how things would tend. Of Lilla's feelings on the subject I could guess nothing as yet; but I thought it would not be difficult soon to know all; and meanwhile I could see no reason why she should not love this handsome, manly, simple, successful fellow.

As for him, I envied him, because he could love and hope. The whole thing gave me sincere pleasure, and yet a queer, selfish shade of sadness fell on me, too, as I walked home alone. I could not help thinking somewhat grimly that my condition resembled a little that of a man on board a disabled and sinking ship, who sees the last of his friends safely received in the boat which has no room left for him.

That was one of the incidents I had to relate before leaping over a few chapters of my life, because it serves to foreshadow and explain what happened during the interval. Another incident, seemingly unconnected with this, must be told about the same time, as it tended toward the same end.

One day I had made an appointment with Ned Lambert in town. We were to meet at half past four o'clock, and we had fixed on Palace Yard as a convenient rendezvous. It was a fine frosty evening in late February, and the cheery sunbeams were falling lovingly on the Abbey and on the gilded pinnacles of the Clock-Tower. Palace Yard was full of bustle and life; carriages and cabs were driving up every moment and depositing members, to make way for whom policemen kept scurrying here and there, and driving back the ever-encroaching rows of people who flanked the entrance to the great old Hall. I was somewhat too soon for my appointment, and I knew that Lambert would make his appearance precisely as the clock chimed the half hour — not a minute sooner, not a minute later. So I too fell into the crowd, and occupied myself in watching the senators as they rode or drove up, and thinking what a very fine thing it must be to be one of a body of personages so high and mighty that crowds gathered to see you go to your work, and that, even though you only came up in a hansom cab, a policeman rushed to clear the way, that your august feet might tread an unimpeded pavement. Presently, however, my eyes rested on a figure in the little rank of spectators just before my own, the sight of which was quite enough to make me fall back precipitately.

It was Lyndon—the wrong Lyndon, the prodigal son, the outlaw. He was dressed with what I can not help calling studied and artistic poverty. His hat was rusty in hue; his coat was all threadbare, and in one or two places actually torn; but both were brushed with elaborate care. He had black gloves on, which were gone in the fingers; his trowsers were strapped down carefully. Looking at him from a purely dramatic point of view, I should say his appearance expressed Honest Poverty in the person of a Heavy Father.

The moment I saw him I was convinced something was "up;" and I drew back to avoid being seen by his peering black eyes. I could observe, however, that he kept always glancing up toward the Parliament Street end of Palace Yard.

Presently a carriage drove up, in which I saw a face I knew. It was an open carriage, frosty though the day was. Mr. Lyndon—the Lyndon in possession, the Tommy Goodboy—sat in it, with a pale, handsome, slender young woman, whom I assumed to be one of his daughters. The carriage stopped at the entrance to Westminster Hall.

"Now," I thought to myself, "we are in for a pretty scene."

I saw the other Lyndon move forward. Suddenly he drew back, as the strident voice of the M.P. was heard saying,

"You wait there, Lilla; I'll just take my seat and come back."

The member got down and strode into the Hall, and the carriage began to withdraw to the other side of the yard.

I almost thought of profiting by the interval to seize the confounded Heavy Father, expostulate with him, and even drag him away, when I saw him break from the crowd, plunge at the carriage, and cling to its side.

"Lilla!" he exclaimed, in tones so loud that even those who were farther off than I from the carriage must have heard the words distinctly —"Lilla, my daughter, my beloved daughter! do you not know your father—your outcast, wronged father? Have they, then, taught you to hate, hate, hate me, my sweet child?—Get away; don't attempt to interfere. What business is it of yours, confound you!"

These last words were addressed to the first policeman who rushed forward and attempted to drag him away.

The young lady in the carriage sat pale and apparently bewildered, but without showing any wild affright. She was a handsome girl, with a colorless Madonna face, large deep violet eyes, and dark brown hair.

"Come, none of this!" expostulated the policeman. "You come away quietly, or I shall have to lock you up."

"Stand back, minion! Blue-coated minion, away! That lady is my daughter. May not a father speak with his own child? I appeal

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to my fellow-countrymen, my fellow-Englishmen here around. They will not allow me to be thus ill-used."

"Bravo, old cove!" was the remark of one fellow-Englishman.

"Go it, Wiggy!" cried another sympathizer.

The general crowd laughed.

The girl in the carriage looked paler than before, but she fixed pitying eyes on poor battling Lyndon.

"Don't hurt him," she called to the policeman, in clear, firm tones. "The poor man is mad!"

"I am not mad!" screamed Lyndon. "This hair—" and he put his hand to his head, but stopped.

I do believe he was about to say, "This hair I tear is mine!" but, recollecting that he only wore a wig, he checked himself in time. "I am not mad! That lady is my daughter."

"No, she ain't," expostulated the policeman. "I know that lady well enough. Come away now, that's a good fellow, and don't make any more row. Come away. Where do you live? where are your friends?"

"There! my daughter is my only friend! Let me go! Let me know if she casts me off. —Lilla! Are you not Lilla?"

"My name is Lilla," said the young lady, looking pityingly at him; "but I do not know you.—I am sure," she said to the policeman, "the poor man is mad. Pray take him away, but deal gently with him; and let me know, please, if you can, something about him. Send some one to me—to Miss Lilla Lyndon, Connaught Place. Has he no friends? Does nobody know him?"

An impulse I could not resist dragged me into the business. I pushed my way through the crowd; I took off my hat to the young lady, whose sweet, calm face had attracted me from the first.

"I know him, Miss Lyndon," I said; "and if he will come with me I shall be happy to take charge of him."

"He is mad, is he not?" she asked, bending forward and lowering her tone.

"In one sense he is indeed mad."

"Can I do any thing for him? Is he an object of charity? Has he no friends?"

"He has, I believe, no friends—none whatever."

"*You* are not, then, a friend of his?"

"Indeed, no; but I know some members of his family, and should like to take charge of him for their sake."

By this time, however, Lyndon had quite recovered himself. His mistake was clear to him now. The name of Lilla had misled him. He really had thought, no doubt, that the Lilla Lyndon before him must be his own daughter. He twisted himself from the hands of the policeman, and, coming up to the carriage, took off his hat and made a low bow.

"I have to ask the lady's pardon," he said, "her very humble pardon. I am not mad; I am as sane as any senator over the way; but I have made a mistake—not so great a mistake, perhaps, as it may seem just now. I am but mad north-northwest, although in this instance, and with the wind southerly too, I have failed to know a hawk from a hernshaw. I have made a mistake, and I apologize for it. What more can a gentleman do? I *am* a gentleman, Miss Lilla Lyndon, although I confess that just at present I may not perhaps quite look like one; but you shall know the fact one day. Meanwhile, allow me again to apologize and to withdraw. Enough has been done for fame to-day. My compliments to your dear father. I decline the escort of the police-force, and I repudiate the friendship of Mr. Emanuel Temple. I want no one to take care of me but Providence."

He again made a low bow, addressed to Miss Lyndon, honored me with a contemptuous glance, pushed his way through the grinning and wondering crowd up to a grinning and wondering driver of a hansom cab, mounted lightly into the cab, and was rattled away.

I was backing out of the dispersing crowd too, when Miss Lyndon again leaned from her carriage, and said, very earnestly, "May I ask, Sir, if you can tell me any thing about that strange man?"

"Nothing, Miss Lyndon; nothing that you could care to hear."

"But there is something. Pray what is his name? Oh, here is papa at last."

Mr. Lyndon, M.P., came rapidly up, looking red and angry. I took advantage of his coming to escape from an embarrassing question by bowing to the lady and walking away.

I looked calmly in Mr. Lyndon's face, but sought and made no sign of recognition. I could see that his daughter began at once eagerly talking with him, and that she glanced toward me. I could see too that he looked irritated and excited. And I had the comfort of thinking that he would probably set me down as an accomplice and actor in his brother's pleasant little performance.

The whole scene, though it seemed long, had not occupied five minutes, and the little bubble of excitement it had created in Palace Yard soon collapsed and wholly melted away.

Mr. Lyndon and his daughter drove off; and by the time Ned Lambert came up to his appointment there was no evidence of any thing unusual having happened.

I did not tell him any thing about it, although I should have been glad enough of a little of his advice; but I preferred to think the matter calmly over before I took any body, even him, into my confidence.

Late that night I was going home alone, having parted with Lambert. I was walking slowly along Piccadilly, when an arm was suddenly thrust into mine, a burst of mellow laughter pealed in my ear, and I found that the detested Lyndon was walking beside me.

"Temple," he broke out, "I forgive you!

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To-day I repudiated you, because I thought you wanted to disavow my acquaintance, you shabby dog, in order that you might stand well in the eyes of my pretty niece. But I am delighted to meet you now, for I do so want to talk the matter over; and you are, I give you my word, my sole confidant."

I came to a dead stand.

"Pray tell me," I asked, as sternly as I could, "which is your way?"

"Just so, in order that you may go the other way. I know all about that, Temple; and, as I have had occasion to remark to you before, you sometimes adopt a sort of conventional coarseness only fit for the most inferior transpontine drama. Don't try that on, Temple. Qualify for the Adelphi, at the lowest, if you will practice stage-talk in private life. Be genial, man, be sociable! Look at me. Above all, try to be a gentleman. Don't you know that I rather like you?"

"Yes; but then I don't like you."

"Coarsely candid. *I* don't mind. Come, let us move on a little. I am going your way, wherever that is. Don't try to thwart me; I have a motive in it. I'll follow you, if I can not have the pleasure of your friendly companionship."

It occurred to me at once that he had now perhaps resolved on changing his tactics, and persecuting his wife and child; and that he hoped, by finding out where I lived, to come upon their track. So I straightway resolved to baffle him. Like Morgiana observing the stranger in the Arabian tale, I at once leaped to the conclusion that, whatever he might have in view, it would be for the interest of society to thwart him. So I permitted his companionship, and walked on, resolved to lead him a pretty dance if he hoped to find out my whereabouts.

"That was a funny mistake of mine to-day," he chuckled; "but very natural. I don't know that any harm is done, after all. It's not a bad way of opening the campaign, and giving Tommy Goodboy a sort of notion of what he has got to expect. What a happy evening he must have spent! What a string of lies he must have told that fine girl, my niece! Isn't she a fine girl, Temple? I feel quite proud of her. I foresee that she will prove immensely useful. Goodboy will have to come to terms, or woe upon his life! By-the-way, Temple, do you know any thing of astronomy?"

"Nothing."

"Ah! what a pity! Then that magnificent sky over our heads is, I suppose, all a blank to you! Just a pavement or floor inverted! I dare say the floundering Venuses and Cupids on the Hampton Court ceiling would interest you a good deal more than that field of sublime constellations. Well, I tell you frankly, I wouldn't be that sort of fellow, Temple, for any thing you could give me. No, I wouldn't indeed; I have always noticed, though, that you professional singing-fellows are generally very stupid. The spiritual nature doesn't seem to get developed at all. Wonder how that is? The women don't appear to me to be so bad."

"Are you walking so much out of your way to philosophize on professional singers?"

"Acute youth, no, I am not. The fact is, Mr. Temple—for I want to get back to a game of billiards—I have begun to think a good deal of what you were saying, only too eloquently, the other day. It didn't impress me then, as, I am bound to say, it ought to have done. I was in a frivolous and cynical mood; unfortunately, I sometimes am so. I mean the evening that you appealed to me so very touchingly about my wife and child. You shot an arrow into the air, Temple, and, although at the moment unheeded, it came down and found its mark—a father's heart. I do now long to see my child. I thought I had found her to-day; alas! the voice of Nature guided me wrong, or at least not quite right. Temple, conduct me to my child! You know where she is. Lead me to her."

"This sort of stuff," I replied, very calmly and deliberately, "does not impose upon me. I suppose you want to make your daughter the victim of some such disgraceful exposure as that to which you tried to subject your niece to-day. That you shall certainly never do by any help or hint of mine. Let that be enough. Were you to parade the streets all night at my side—to my disgust—were you to dog my footsteps for a month, you should learn nothing of your daughter from me."

"Temple, an awful thought flashes on me! I beseech of you to answer me! Heavens, it can't be! and yet—tell me, is my daughter married—and to *you?*"

"She is not;" and I broke fiercely away.

"Thank Heaven for that!" was his fervent and pious exclamation.

I hurried away. He looked after me for a while, hesitating; then, apparently giving up the idea of forcing any more of his company on me just then, he broke into a loud laugh, sang out "Good-night, Signor Pantalon!" and went chuckling and stamping back in the direction of his favorite Haymarket.

It was a hideous nuisance to me to have the existence of this dreadful little creature hung as a sort of mysterious burden round my neck. A secret with which I had nothing to do, which I wanted neither to keep nor to disclose, was thrust on me, and seemed to lay a sort of critical and embarrassing responsibility on me. Sometimes I thought of taking Mrs. Lyndon aside and telling her the whole matter, and so putting her on her guard; again, I turned over in my mind the propriety of trusting to Lilla's natural good sense and courage, and making her the confidante. But so long as there was any chance or possibility of his not finding them out and disturbing or disgracing them, I shrank from adding this fresh and superfluous burden of vexation to their hard lives. It was clear that any chance that Lilla—my Lilla—might have from the patronage or bounty of her uncle

would be utterly gone if once her life became mixed up with that of her unfortunate father. I very much mistook the character of Mr. Lyndon, M.P., if that gentleman would not cast off his niece as though she were a plague-infected garment, once it became apparent that recognizing her would be encouraging his outlaw brother. Thus far, at least, the crusade of the latter seemed directed only against the inhabitants of the fine house in Connaught Place. And although I had no doubt that he would in the end, if needful, kick with equal foot at the door of the Chelsea lodging-house, yet, until he showed some signs of beginning to attack, it seemed only raising a needless alarm to put my friends on their guard.

Positively, I entertained ideas of writing to, or waiting on, or throwing myself in the way of Miss Lyndon—the other Lilla Lyndon—and telling her who the madman was, and appealing to her pity and kindliness to prevail upon her father to pension him quietly off, and thus buy his perpetual absence and silence. I fear that pure good-nature toward my friends did not wholly inspire this notion. I own that I should have dearly liked a few words of conversation with that sweet, clear voice; to have looked in those pure, pitying eyes again. Was this, then, one of the proud, cold, puritanical spinsters *my* Lilla had so often described to me? She had clearly never seen this one, at least; and, unless the latter was a very accomplished actress indeed, she could never have heard of any other Lilla Lyndon than herself. For when the little scoundrel claimed her as his daughter because her name was Lilla, her face exhibited only surprise and pity; she showed not the faintest gleam of any comprehension of his meaning or his mistake.

I could not forget her eyes and her voice. I even walked by Connaught Place several times, hoping to see her, but not confessing to myself that I did so hope. So I temporized and postponed, and kept my secret, and did nothing more. But I held still to my first impulse, and wished for a chance of trusting to the girl's pure and sympathetic face, and breaking through ceremony and conventionality by appealing to her and telling her all.

CHAPTER XVI.

AGAIN—AT LAST!

This is not a story of the struggles of a poor artist and adventurer, though so much of my life was indeed just such a story. But lives like mine have been told so often before that I could add little new by dwelling on the professional and adventurous part of my existence, even if I had the art to tell such things as other men have told them. Therefore I frankly intimated to my readers long ago that I do not mean to enter into the details of my struggles, my disappointments, my privations, my temporary success. Of all these I shall only say, like the fair dame pressed to explain the duties of the *cicisbeo*, "I beseech you to suppose them." In brief, the professional story of my life is this: I struggled long and wearily. At last I succeeded, for a time. Then I lost the best of my voice, and I faded back into quiet obscurity, not without comfort. For what Carlyle calls four-and-twenty resplendent months I was a brilliant success in the popular sense. I know myself, and I know that I never was or could be a great singer. I never was in the high sense an artist. I never had a genius for music, or for any thing; but I had my run of success—I had my day. It was a short one, and it is over; and I don't regret it. "I cease to live," says the poet's Egmont; "but I have lived!"

In my days of swift success I came to know a great many authors, sculptors, painters, critics, artists of every class, who had all more or less succeeded in life; and I found that the actor or the singer has some splendid chances which are denied to any other adventurer after popular favor. Worst off of all his brethren I rate the literary adventurer, although Thackeray, with the complacency of recognized and triumphant genius, pointed out the immense advantage the author enjoys in requiring neither patronage nor capital, but only a few sheets of paper and a steel pen. Where is his arena, his tribune? He has written his grand tragedy. Very good. Who is going to play it?—nay, what manager is going to read it? He has finished every chapter of his novel; and then begins the dreariest part of his business. I remember literary friends of mine used to say, when sometimes the author of "Vanity Fair" showed his grand white head among us, that he had had toil enough to persuade the public to read what he had written, that he had hawked about his great book long enough before any publisher could be induced to run the risk of printing it. The difficulty was to get any publisher to read it. Change "Vanity Fair" into a picture or a statue, and it would at least have found a place in an exhibition, where a crowd, coming for the sole purpose of looking at pictures and statues, would have seen it, and some eye would surely have found out its worth. To read through thousands on thousands of scrawled MS. pages, in the hope of some time coming on a literary treasure, is a wearisome diving process which only stubborn souls long endure; but to hunt through an art-exhibition is a pleasant and easy work. I rate the chances of the painter or the sculptor, then, rather above those of the literary man. But while it is true that not every one can get a chance of exhibiting his picture in any gallery, it is also true that even in the gallery it may pass unnoticed of the crowd, who only run to look at the pictures of men with names, or pictures they have been forewarned to look at. Suppose, however, that every one going into the gallery were compelled to look at every picture in turn—were compelled at least to stand before it, and look at that or

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nothing for a certain number of minutes, would not the obscure artist's chances be immensely increased in value? But this is precisely the condition of the actor or the singer. Once, at the very least, in his three or five acts he is in absolute possession of the audience. No one may speak or sing but he. It is his chance. If he can speak or sing in any way worth listening to there is his opportunity of doing it. I have known scores of men in other professions who only wanted just one such chance to crown their ambition, or, at all events, to crush it, and who never got the chance, but went along through life disappointed and embittered, girding at the successful, snarling at popular favor, wailing against destiny, and always convinced that if the world could but have seen or heard them it would have fallen in homage at their feet. The public, indeed, will not go fishing for talent, like pearl-divers. It is enough to ask that they shall recognize it when set before them. "Genius," says Mürger, "is the sun; all the world sees it. Talent is the diamond in the mine; it is prized when discovered." This was my chance. I got an opportunity of holding up my poor little artistic diamond. The opening came; I had the stage all to myself for a few moments, and I really had been gifted by Nature with a voice which then, at least, could hardly have failed to make an impression. It made its impression, and I succeeded.

This was in Italy. I came home to England, after an absence comparatively very short, a success. My way began to be clear before me. I began to have friends, admirers, rivals, detractors, satellites, partisans, and enemies. I grew familiar with my own name in print; I became accustomed to the receipt of anonymous letters—some full of praise, not a few full of love, a great many breathing contempt and detestation. I began to judge of journals and critics only according to their way of dealing with myself.

I must say that hardly any kind of life seems to be more corrupting to independent and generous manhood than that which depends upon the public admiration. It is hardly a whit better than that which hangs on princes' favor. The miserable jealousies, the paltry rivalries and spites, the mean, imperious triumph over somebody else's failure or humiliation, the pitiful exultation over one's own passing success, the womanish anxiety to know what is said of one, the child-like succession of exaltation and depression, the absorbing vanity, the sickening love of praise, and the nauseous capacity for swallowing it—all these seem to be as strictly the disease and danger of artistic life as yellow-fever is of the West Indies, or dysentery of the East. I have indeed known strong natures both in men and women which could defy the contagion, and retain their healthy and self-reliant simplicity to the last. I have seen, even in stage-life, virgins who could tread those hideous hot plow-shares of vanity and jealousy, and come out unscathed. I have known men who to the last kept the whiteness of their souls, and never felt a pang of mean joy over another's failure, or of unmanly pride or unmanly grief at success or failure of their own. But such natures are indeed the rarest of phenomena, and only make the general character of the race show more repulsively. You can't help it; I mean, we common natures can not help it. Some of us go in resolving that we will not be like the others, that we will not lay down our manhood, and our courage, and our generosity, and succumb to the poisonous atmosphere of praise, and rivalry, and jealousy. But we soon grow like the rest; we rage at a disparaging word; we swell with pride over the most outrageous praise; our bosoms burst with gall when some new rival is spoken of too favorably or applauded too loudly; we rejoice with a base and coward joy, which our lying lips dare not confess, when some one whom openly we call a friend makes a failure and falls down. Our nature becomes positively sexless; and man detests woman if she outshines him, just as rival beauties of a fribble season may hate each other. I protest I did not, until I came in for some little artistic success, ever believe it possible I could hate—or, indeed, that any man could hate—an attractive and pretty woman who had never either slighted or betrayed him. I soon learned that the wretched creature who lives on the favor of the public can get to envy and detest any being that stands between him and the sun of his existence.

From my soul I detested the whole thing. I distinctly saw my moral nature becoming contaminated by it, and I despised myself even for the momentary pang of pride and envy which I honestly did my best to crush and conquer. I sometimes thought to myself, "The time must soon come, if one of us does not die meanwhile, when I shall meet Christina. Shall I find her even as one of these? Shall I find that her heart swells with pitiful pride and rankles with paltry spleen; that she hates her rivals; that she can swallow any amount of praise, and gladden in it; that she can cry when some critic disparages her or praises some one else?"

I could not believe it; yet I could not but fear; I could not but sometimes wish that I had been less fortunate in my personal ambition, and that I were still far removed in obscurity out of her possible path.

I heard of her often. She was soon to return to England, where her sudden departure and long absence, after so sudden a success, lent new attraction to her. People said she was married. I had heard the statement almost with composure. She had become like a dream to me. When I saw her last I was little more than a boy; I stood now on the latest verge of my youth: a whole working lifetime lay between. I believed that I had so far disciplined my nature and subordinated early and disappointed passion, that I could meet her now again with unmoved politeness, and even on our first meeting look calmly in her face, touch

her hand without tremor, and congratulate her becomingly upon her great success.

Yes, they said she was married; and it was certain that she now described herself as Madame Reichstein, not Mademoiselle Reichstein. Indeed, some maintained that she was not only a wife, but actually a widow. But they said all manner of things about her. Her husband was an *entrepreneur;* he was an Australian adventurer; he was a rich Yankee speculator; he was a scion of a noble Austrian family, who never would look at him after his *mésalliance;* whoever he was, he had deserted her: no, it was she who had run away from him while they were living at Nice, and actually in their honeymoon; he used to beat her; she once tried to stab him: at all events, he was dead now. Nay, there was not a word of truth in all that; the real fact was, that she never was married at all; the young nobleman killed himself for love of her, and left her all his property; and so forth, and so forth. These and countless other stories —equally incoherent, extravagant, and contradictory—passed from mouth to mouth among the people I met who talked about Christina Reichstein.

I found Ned Lambert, when I returned to England, quite established as the household friend of the Lyndons. He used to come and dine with them almost every Sunday, having made a definite arrangement to that effect with Mrs. Lyndon, who was ready enough, and rejoiced to eke out her housekeeping by such a mode of contribution, and who had indeed quite a genius for cookery. Lambert liked the change immensely. He said he was fond of a good dinner on Sunday, and that when he dined alone at his own lodgings he never ventured to ask his landlady for any thing beyond the cold corpse of a fowl cooked on the Saturday. But it was not his relish for a savory little dinner which brought him all the way to our dreary district; and I saw a marked change, both in him and in Lilla, when I once more joined the little circle. Lilla was more thoughtful, more melancholy, less pleasure-loving than before; he, on the other hand, was generally brighter and more animated, unless when he was studying manners and deportment, which indeed he almost always was. Many a time I saw him furtively glance under his eyes at Lilla, as if to learn from her expression whether he had accomplished a triumph or committed a solecism of etiquette. I could not resist the temptation to make an inquiry once in Lilla's presence about his Sunday evening relief from coat-sleeves; whereat he looked so distressed and confused that Lilla insisted on having the whole story, and had it accordingly, and laughed very much; and Lambert at last gave way, and likewise laughed; and we all laughed a good deal longer than the story deserved. I was glad to have made Lilla laugh at any one's expense, for, poor girl, she laughed less now than of old days, and her face looked pale and anxious. I soon found out the reason.

Between Lambert and myself we had boxes, stalls, and so forth, for some theatre almost at will. One night we went—Lilla, her mother, Lambert, and myself: Lambert would not stir without Mrs. Lyndon—to see a new performer as Claude Melnotte. He, the new Claude Melnotte, was the idol of one of the colonies, and was a statuesque, handsome, deep-voiced, energetic, wooden-headed sort of actor. I thought the whole thing dreadfully tiresome, and Lambert thought so too; but Lilla was quite melted by it, and streamed with tears. A year before I know that she would have laughed at the business, or yawned over it. I saw Lambert's eyes resting on her with profound admiration and sympathy; and he looked up and caught my eye, and gave me a glance, partly whimsical, partly sentimental, partly bashful and apologetic, which would have made quite a picture in itself. She had her depths of sensibility, then, this poor girl, whose bloom the hard coarse grit of London life had so nearly rubbed away. Never did she shed tears at a theatre when I was her companion, or care for any performance which was supposed to demand tear-shedding as its tribute.

I spoke of the change to Lambert himself that night.

"It's true," he replied, slowly and sententiously; "I have often thought that the best test you could have of a woman's intelligence and of her sympathies would be to watch her demeanor at a theatre. Hear her comments, and observe how she looks; and the fellow who does not know her then is an idiot, who never could know any thing of her. You can't imagine, Temple, how I hate some women I see at a play: they look so cold and stolid and severely proper and self-contained, that I should like to have them expelled from the presence of art altogether. I wonder how you will feel at the sight of such people when you come on our stage, before our unimpassioned creatures here. It is not like Italy, Temple—at least, I fancy so; and indeed I have heard it from—Oh, from many who have felt it."

"From Madame Reichstein, for example?"

I was determined not to shrink from that name, or allow him to suppose that I faltered at it.

"Yes, from her in especial. She was dreadfully chilled here in London, although they gave her quite unusual honors."

"She would be. Her enthusiasm and her really lyric nature would naturally chafe against our British composure."

He glanced at me inquiringly, as if he meant to ask whether this calmness was real or put on. If I had been asked then I could have answered in all sincerity that I believed it real. I know now that it was but an effort of self-discipline.

"We had a sort of scene at a theatre one night," he said, rapidly changing the subject; "I mean Lilla—Miss Lyndon—and I."

"Indeed! What happened?"

"Some fellow—mad, I think—seized her by

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the arm, just as I was handing her into a cab —her mother was already in—and jabbered some insane nonsense at her. I pushed him away, and the wretched creature flew at me like a wild-cat, and there was quite a disturbance."

"Who was he? What was he like?"

"Oh, quite an *outré*, mad-looking creature, small and old, with a black wig. I could have crushed him; but, of course, I wasn't going to hit a poor old bloke—old man, I mean; and so I only dragged him away, and asked a policeman to take charge of him. But he was near raising a perfect mob about us, shrieking out that I was carrying off his long-lost daughter, and I don't know what other rubbish; and he cut my lip, so that I was a pretty sight, I can tell you."

"What became of Lilla?"

"She comported herself most bravely; neither screamed nor fainted. I got rid of my lunatic as soon as I could."

"Did Mrs. Lyndon see him?"

"No, she didn't. It so happened that she never got a glimpse of him; and I was very glad. She is a nervous woman, and would have been greatly frightened by the sight of so extraordinary a creature. Of course I made nothing of it, and I never heard any more about it."

"You never found out any thing about him?"

"Never; and I never tried to."

I said no more on the subject; I needed no further explanation.

Some days after this, a few of us—Lambert, myself, and one or two rising actors and *littérateurs*—gave a little *fête* to some of our friends at Richmond. It was very early in the season. We dined, of course, at the Star and Garter. Lilla Lyndon was of the company. We were all very pleasant. I was as happy as a bright sun, delicious air, and joyous company could make any man; and I, at least, never could be insensible to the mere joy of living, of barely living, under such sun and in such air. I was a sort of rising star too, in a very small way, and might have flirted and been flattered a good deal; and did on this occasion accept my opportunities. I walked through the gardens, after dinner, with a pretty, vivacious girl leaning on my arm; a girl who had just made a brilliant success in light comedy, and promised indeed to be another Abington or Nisbett, until she married, poor thing, and died in her first confinement. Her people lived not far from Norwood; and a short time since, walking out from the Crystal Palace all ringing with music, I strayed into a church-yard, and came upon a tombstone bearing the name of my poor young friend. This Richmond day, however, of which I speak, was darkened by no shadow from the future, and we were all very bright and happy.

"Look there!" said my companion, suddenly, and with a joyous laugh. "See how people make love off the stage."

She directed my attention to two figures in a shady little alley of shrubs and trees not far from us. They were Lambert and Lilla Lyndon. She was leaning on his arm; her eyes were downcast, her cheeks were crimson, her step was slow. He bent his tall figure over her; he was pleading earnestly, passionately—that any one could see—into her ear. It had come, then, just as I thought it would. He loved her; and now he was telling her so; and I could not doubt what her answer would be.

Queer pangs shot through me. I was rejoiced at the prospect of the happiness of both my friends. I thought with delight that Lilla would no longer be poor; that she would have a true home to shelter her, a manly heart to lean on; that he would have a life made warm by love; and I longed to congratulate them both, and tell them how sincerely I gladdened in their love and their happiness. And yet the sight brought with it too a keen sense of isolation and loneliness. I had felt for Lilla just that warm and tender friendship which is to love "as the moonlight to the sunlight." She had been a friend to me when friends were most precious and most rare. She had cared for me when I was sick, confided in me always; begged for me, unasked and almost unthanked, of one who probably despised her and me only all the more for it. And now I was about to lose her; the only woman from whom I could expect a greeting that was more than formal, a glance that was at once friendly and sincere. I don't say that this made me sad. I know I was sincerely glad that things were to be so; but it made me thoughtful. I was moody enough to wish to be alone for a little; and ungallant enough to get gradually rid of my fair and joyous companion. I felt a twinge of remorse at the recollection when I came the other day upon the stone which bore the record of her name, her birth, her marriage, her death, and the inconsolable grief of her afflicted husband—who is now alive and merry with his third wife.

I was glad to be alone. I stretched myself on the grass. The evening was glowingly, gloriously hot. I heard the voices of singers not far away, and the notes of a piano. I saw nothing but the unflecked sky of blue above my head, and the slender spiral vapor of my cigar. Was I happy? Was I miserable? Happy or miserable, those moments were ecstatic. Are not the sensations produced by extreme heat and extreme cold so much alike that the African brought for the first time into contact with snow fancies it has burned him? I think there are pangs of delight and of pain—where the soul is the medium, not the nerves—which are not easily to be distinguished from each other.

I started at an approaching step. Lilla was close beside me; she looked pale and much distressed. I jumped to my feet.

"I have been looking for you every where," she said; "I want you to take me home."

"Home so soon? Are you going home already?"

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"Yes. I should like to, very much; if you don't mind leaving so early. Or I will wait longer, as long as you like, if you will promise to leave a little before the rest, and to come with me."

"Certainly, Lilla, when you please. But where is Lambert?"

"Mr. Lambert? I don't know; at least, I saw him not long since."

"Will Lambert not wish to see you home?"

"If you can't or won't come with me, Emanuel," she said, petulantly, "if you must wait on somebody else, of course I must not worry you about me."

"Why, Lilla, my dear girl, you know very well I will go with you when you please. But I only thought—"

"Dear Emanuel, please don't think any thing; at least, at present. Only do oblige me this once; I am so tired, and I want to get away."

"We will go this instant."

"Thank you; that is kind. And I should like to get quietly out, quite unnoticed, if you please."

"This way, then."

I gave her my arm, and I felt her arm tremble on mine; and could feel that her bosom beat heavily as she leaned on me. Violet circles were round her eyes; and every time she spoke it seemed as if she must break into tears.

There were several hansoms at the door, in which some of our company had come. I meant to take one of them, and convey Lilla home in it. Young ladies don't usually go in hansoms, I believe, with young men; that is, where Respectability reigns. We had no such etiquette in our free and gladsome world. One of Lilla's special delights was, or used to be, a hansom.

But the gardens were full of company. There were many parties there as well as ours. Lilla and I, threading our way outward, were always coming on some brilliant group. It was significant of my poor young friend's state of mind, that she did not even cast a scrutinizing glance at the dresses of the ladies. We hardly spoke at all.

I brought her into a narrow side-path between flowers and plants. We were nearly out now. Toward us there came a group of four or five ladies and gentlemen, straggling along as the width of the path allowed them. One voice struck on my ear, and I knew its sharp and strident tone. I knew it to be the voice of Lilla's uncle. Eminently disagreeable I thought such a meeting would be in a place so narrow that recognition could not be avoided. It was now too late to go back, so we drew up to let the group stream by.

Lilla saw her uncle. She colored, and was a little confused. He did not seem particularly delighted at the meeting.

"Why, Lilla, *you* here?" He gave her his hand rather coldly.

I had been standing silent and stiffly, looking at nothing and feeling highly uncomfortable.

"Yes, uncle; but I am going away now. I have asked this gentleman—don't you know Mr. Temple, uncle?—to take me home."

"Indeed! Yes. How do you do, Mr. Temple?"

I made a formal acknowledgment of his enforced salutation, and in doing so I became conscious that the light of two deep, dark, soft eyes was turned full on me. I became conscious of it—I can use no other phrase—for up to this moment I had positively seen none of the group but Mr. Lyndon alone, and had never looked at the lady who was by his side, and who stopped when he did. But I felt that the light of those eyes was on me, and an electrical thrill ran through me, with which the blood rushed heavily and fiercely to my head, and the pulses of my heart seemed to stand still, and the grass for a moment flickered with changing colors, and the sinking sun appeared to reel in the sky.

And looking up, I saw that Christina Reichstein stood before me.

Not my Lisette! Not my Christina! Beautiful, stately, in the full glow of developed loveliness—no longer a girl; nay, now that the westering sunbeams fell upon her face, I saw that there was something even of the melancholy beauty of a sunset in her own features and expression. Far more beautiful, far more stately, far more attractive, than when I knew her, but not with the fresh and passionate youth which was her exquisite charm long ago. Long ago! A whole life seemed to lie between that time and this. I thought there was something sad, something even of a prematurely wasted look about those glorious eyes. Youth, and early love, and early struggle lay buried in those lustrous hollows. They were as mirrors to me, in which I saw my own dead youth and disappointed love. I turned toward her, and our eyes met and rested upon each other in an instant of unspeakable emotion never to be forgotten in this world.

Christina recovered her composure in a moment.

"We are fortunate, Mr. Lyndon," she said, in her clear musical voice, with the old dash of foreign accent still perceptible in it—"we are fortunate in not having left so soon as I wished; for we meet—at least, I do—two unexpected friends. Your niece I know already, though she seems to have quite forgotten me; and in this gentleman I meet a very old friend."

She gave her hand first to Lilla and then to me. Not the lightest, faintest pressure of her glove indicated to me that I was any thing to her but an old acquaintance.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Lyndon, dryly. "I did not know that you were acquainted with this—ah, this—gentleman, Mr. Temple, before."

"Did you not? Oh yes; we were old acquaintances ever so many years ago. How long ago, Mr. Temple?"

"Several centuries ago at least, Madame Reichstein."

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WE MEET AGAIN.

"Yes; it must be many, many centuries ago," she said, slightly shrugging her shoulders.

"A good way of evading any confession of the number of years," remarked Mr. Lyndon, with a short dry laugh. "If you are going home, Lilla, I think you had better come with us."

"Thank you, uncle. If you can take me, I shall be very glad; and then Mr. Temple need not be dragged away to take care of me."

"No; we need not trouble Mr. Temple to leave so early. Come, Lilla."

"Good-night, Emanuel," said Lilla, holding out her hand to me. "I am so much obliged to you for offering to come with me; and so glad that I have not to take you away."

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"Then I think I shall not go just yet," said Madame Reichstein. "I will go in Mrs. Levison's carriage; she is not leaving for a few minutes. I have not had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Temple for so many years that I can not leave him now, at least until I have exchanged a few words with him, and told him how and when he may see me again. Will you give me your arm, Mr. Temple?"

I offered her my arm without a word. Lilla looked at us both with wondering eyes. This was all the wildest of mystery to her. She forgot for a moment apparently even the trouble that was oppressing her, in the surprise of seeing this unexpected acquaintanceship reveal itself.

"Remember you promised to accept a seat in my carriage," said Lyndon. "We are in no haste; we can wait as long as you please."

"But I don't like the idea of any body waiting for me. No, Mr. Lyndon; pray excuse me this once. Your niece, too, looks quite tired and ill, and I think the sooner you take her out of this the better."

Lyndon scowled and contracted his brow, and looked at Lilla as if he could have found it in his heart to say something rather sharp of her illness, and her presence, and her existence altogether.

"Oh, Lilla's very well," he snarled.—"Are you not?"

"Quite well, uncle.—I am quite well, indeed, dear Madame Reichstein."

"You don't look so, child. No, you must go home, dear; you will come and see me, will you not? I have scolded your uncle before now for not bringing you to me. Good-night, dear." She kissed Lilla quite affectionately. —"Good-night, Mr. Lyndon, and thank you very much."

"Good-night. But you will be at Mrs. Levison's to-night, will you not?"

"Really, I had quite forgotten. Oh yes, certainly—at least, I think so. *Au revoir*, then."

Mr. Lyndon saluted *me* very slightly and formally, and I saw him cast an appealing, disappointed, impatient glance at Christina. It was vain, however. She bowed graciously, smiled sweetly, and then turned and led me away.

All this time I was like one paralyzed of speech. Not even that fiercest stimulus a man's power of self-control can receive, the consciousness that he is making himself ridiculous, could spur me to the mastery of my feelings and the faculty of unmeaning talk. Lately, when it had become apparently certain that I must some time, and that soon, meet Christina, I had rehearsed over and over again the manner in which I should demean myself. Sometimes it was to be a dignified and haughty coldness, sometimes an air of polite, genial, easy indifference. But the one way in which I was never on any account to greet her for the first time was just that which I now found myself driven into—confusion, embarrassment, constraint, and awkward silence.

My throat was dry, my lips were parched; the trail of her rustling dress along the walk was the only sound that seemed to reach my ears; the fragrance of perfumes came faintly from around her; her hand rested on my arm. I did not venture to look at her lest I should meet her eyes, and, stricken by them, give out my soul in some wild outbreak of love or anger.

"Emanuel!"

The word came up low, sweet, and thrilling to my ears. It pierced my heart. It seemed as if between that word and the "*Adel*" I had heard her call from the window years and years ago there was only an utter void.

"Emanuel!"

"Madame—Madame Reichstein."

"No; not that name, Emanuel. Call me by the name you always gave me—long ago. That at least is mine still."

"Christina!"

"Yes. I am still Christina. You must not think harshly of me, Emanuel."

"I do not. Heaven knows I do not."

"You can not judge me, and you must not attempt to do so. I know by your manner now that you think I have injured you."

"Think you have injured me! Think! I look back on so many years of a life worse ten times than any death, and you wonder whether I think you have injured me!"

"Emanuel, if we begin reproaching, I too have something to reproach. If we begin talking of years of suffering, do you think life has been all a pleasure and a joy to me? If you were disappointed, was not I? If you were deceived, was not I?"

"By me, Christina? Never. I—I—loved you, you only, and with all my soul—"

"Hush, hush, my friend, no more of that. No, not one word. All that is dead and gone long ago. Let it sleep. Why should we begin raking up the past, and reproaching each other, and making each other miserable? I did not wish or mean to do so. I wished that we should meet like old friends long separated, who are friends in heart still. I have heard of your success, Emanuel, and I congratulate you. I heard of it but now in Italy, where, look you, you have friends. Greater success too you will have yet. I was not surprised; I always knew it. And me—look at me. Well, I have not failed."

"No. You have indeed succeeded. You, Christina, have realized your highest dreams; you have all you ever longed or prayed for."

"And you envy me, perhaps? And look coldly at me? And wonder why I have succeeded so much better than others? And will join with my enemies in finding defects, and blaming the prejudiced public which overrates? No; I do not think you would do that. That would not be like you."

"Christina, that you could even suggest it

shows that you do not know me. But, indeed, you never did."

"Did I not? But we will not talk of that. Well, then, I have succeeded; and you are just on the verge of full success. They tell me we are to sing together soon."

"So they tell me."

"Yes, I believe so; I suppose it will be. In fact, I will have it so, although Mr. Lyndon does not seem much to like it."

"What right of judgment has he?"

"Well, you know the right he has"—and she shrugged her shoulders—"the right of the man with the money who stands quietly in the shadow behind the manager whose name is on the bill. That right he has. But to me it matters little; I have my own way, or—"

"Mr. Lyndon is a close friend of yours?"

"I suppose so. I have a great many close friends, and I hope I value them all exactly as they deserve. You look coldly and strangely at me, Emanuel," she said, suddenly changing her tone of flippancy and cynicism, for the old friendly pathetic voice, "and you seem as if you too would judge me only by words, and ways, and externals. If you will, I tell you frankly beforehand that you will judge me harshly—as, perhaps, others do—and you will judge me wrongly, and I shall be disappointed. Do not; oh, do not! We shall have to see each other much in the future, and I should like dearly to have one friend and brother."

Voices were close behind us; and I heard Madame Reichstein's name mentioned as if she were sought for.

"This way, Emanuel, please; I see my friends, and I must go with them. Is it not all like a dream that we have met again? Thank you, Mr. Temple; you will come and see me? —Now, dear Mrs. Levison.—Good-night, Mr. Temple."

She gave me her hand, and said in a lower tone, "Good-night, Emanuel;" and left me.

I sauntered vacuously back into the garden. My brain was all in a whirl. I put between my lips the cigar long since extinguished, and was for a while unconscious that it did not burn. A sense of disappointment mingled with all the confused feelings that came up in my mind. The Christina I had found was not like the Christina I had lost. Something of sharpness, of worldliness, of flippancy, seemed in her which jarred and grated on me; and yet now and then some word or tone brought back all the old memories, the ideal Christina, the strong love. I tried to remember and dwell on only the one delicious, pathetic sound which came from her lips when she spoke my name, and to put aside all association of her with the common world—with Lyndon's coarse and purse-proud ways, with the kind of society in which Lyndon strove to be a dictator, with the paltry spites of cliques and the mean jealousies of rivals. I tried to do this; I did my best to succeed; but the sense of disappointment outlived my efforts.

CHAPTER XVII.

A BREAKING-UP.

I DID not want to meet Lambert or any of my friends any more that night; I had no motive for wishing to be home early; I had no motive, indeed, for wishing to do any thing, except to get away from just the place where I was: so I lighted a cigar and took to the road. I walked from Richmond, choosing all the byways and circuitous complicated "short-cuts" that could well be found, so that by the time I arrived in town I was pretty well tired. I looked into a theatre, and found it very dull; I dropped into a small and modest club of artists and journalists and young authors, of which I had lately become a member, and listened to some of the ordinary gabble in the smoking-room, about this man's piece and that man's novel, and this other's overdone "business" in the comic part, and somebody else's anger at the malignity of the critics, who don't see the merit of his wife's novel, and all the rest of the kind of thing which one hears in such a place. It was weary, or I was weary, and I hardly talked to any body.

At last it grew late, and I went home. I had resolved to stay out long enough to be certain that I should find nobody stirring; I was disappointed, however. There were lights in the little parlor; I let myself in with my latch-key, and would have gone up stairs, if I could, without seeing any body. As I passed the parlor-door, however, Lilla's voice called me; I went in, and found her looking very pale and weary and sad. She was still in the dress she had worn that day at Richmond.

"Not in bed yet, Lilla?"

"Not yet; I have been waiting up partly to see you. Mamma is up too. I am going away to-morrow, Emanuel."

"Going away! Going where?"

"I am going to Paris. I am going to have a hand in a school there—in a kind of partnership with a person I know, a very clever sort of woman, a Miss Whitelocke, who took quite a liking to me, and has a very good opinion of my capacity—no great proof of her cleverness is that, certainly."

"But this is very sudden; you never spoke a word to me of this before."

"No. Because nothing was certain, and I hadn't made up my mind; and we both have our secrets, Mr. Temple, have we not? You always spoke of me as your sister, Emanuel; but you seem to have kept something from me which you would not have kept from your sister, and you allowed me once to exhibit myself in a very ridiculous light."

"Lilla, my dear girl, indeed there was nothing to tell. I did not know myself who she was; who Madame—"

"I don't want to know your secrets, Emanuel, and don't look put out about it, for I am not at all angry, and I think you showed only your good sense in not trusting so silly

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a creature as I have always proved myself to be."

"Indeed, indeed, Lilla, you don't understand me; you can't understand why I could not be as frank with you as I could have wished to be."

"Please let us not talk any more of that just now. I am going away, Emanuel; I must go from this place. I must try to do something for my mother, and make a home for her. Oh, she has need of every help, and she has no one but me—no one. Every one despises her—and us both—and I don't wonder."

"Your uncle, Lilla; does he know?"

"My uncle? Yes, he does. He scolded me to-day, and—and told me we were a disgrace to him; and so we are. And do you know what he offered, Emanuel? He offered to take me into his house and keep me like a lady—like one of his own daughters, he said—if I would leave my mother, and promise not to see her any more, except once a month, or something of that kind. My poor dear, loving, foolish old mother! She has made a slave of herself all her life for me; and little return I ever gave her."

"What did you tell him?"

"Well, I told him what he will remember. I flashed out upon him, and told him just what I felt; not a word did I spare. I told him I scorned his money and his kindness, and that, please God, I would stand by my mother while she lived; and I am afraid I added that perhaps some day one of his own daughters might be invited to leave *him*, and might give a different answer from mine. He was quite white with anger. I didn't care—I don't care. I am glad I spoke out; it did me good; perhaps it will do him good."

"Lilla, I always thought you had a fine, noble nature; now I know it."

"Noble nature! nonsense. I am not going to desert my poor mother—now especially—that's all. But I waited up to tell you all this; and I want you not to say any thing to her about the condition my uncle offered, for I haven't told her that; she would worry me to death, poor soul, about sacrificing myself, and stuff. And I want you to back me up; to say that every thing I do is right and wise, and for the best, and all that. You will do this, Emanuel, like a kind, dear fellow, will you not? And don't speak of any thing else, any thing you may know or guess, or that—Oh, you *must* understand me; but just tell her you think I am doing the most sensible thing possible in going to Paris."

"But, Lilla, tell me—do let me ask you—why are you doing this? Do confide in me. You may do so; I know all."

"All?" she said, flushing up.

"Yes, my dear, all. I know, for instance, what happened to-day. I knew it was coming. Now, why can you not stay and make Ned Lambert—that true-hearted, manly, clever fellow—as happy as he asks to be?"

"Emanuel, you have said you know all. If so, you know my reason. I can not bring disgraceful vexation on Edward Lambert; and to marry me just now would bring disgrace on any man. Oh, I am so unhappy, so wretched; and I have been crying all the evening. I have been silly and deceived all my life through, and filled up with foolish and false notions and expectations; and at last I know the whole truth. It is enough to crush any one." And the poor girl burst into tears.

"Have you told Lambert your reason," I asked; "the reason of your leaving London?"

"I have not, I have not; and I am ashamed to say that I have still idle pride enough left in me to conceal the truth from him."

"But really, Lilla, I must ask you—is the thing so bad as all this? Are you not far too sensitive? You can't suppose Ned Lambert could be affected for a moment in his feelings toward you by the fact that—" I stopped, rather embarrassed. What was I to say of her father? This, of course, was the obstacle and the disgrace of which she had spoken.

"No, Emanuel, I don't. Ah, I know him too well; and for that very reason I will not allow him to be victimized."

"But would you not allow him to judge for himself?"

"No, Emanuel, no, no. Don't speak of it to me; pray don't. And, oh, I beseech of you, I implore of you, don't tell him! Don't let us seem disgraceful in his eyes. Listen: I have not been brought up well, Emanuel; I need not tell you that. I have not been made to care much for truth and religion, and any thing of that sort; and I am not religious, or particularly good; but somehow I never did see this so plainly as of late, when I came to contrast myself with others—and with *him*. I don't think I should have been fit for Edward Lambert at my very best. I don't think poor mother and myself are much the sort of people to make a very delightful home for so good and noble a man. But this last thing I have come to know has decided me. Emanuel, have you seen my father?"

"I have. I have known him for some time."

"And known who he was?"

"Yes, Lilla."

"Yes. And you kept it to yourself, because you did not wish to shame me?"

"No, Lilla; because I did not wish to pain you when there seemed no need of it, or no good likely to come of your knowing it. It does not shame *you*; it can not."

"Not in your eyes, perhaps, for you know us; and you know it is no fault of ours—at least, of mine. Not in your eyes."

"Nor, surely, in *his*."

"Oh no, no; I know that. But it would bring on him endless vexation and humiliation; and I should be a scandal to him, even though he did not say it, or think it; and I can not bring him or myself to such a pass. I could

bring him nothing but disgrace, and that I won't bring him; I think too highly of him. I feel that I am doing right; and I think it is the first time in my life I ever resolved upon doing any thing just because it was right. I have been silly and frivolous enough; but I have my feelings, Emanuel, and my sense of honor, and my pride, like other people."

"Lilla, my own," called her mother's voice from below, "it is late, my dear, and you ought to be in bed."

"Yes, mother, I dare say I ought; and accordingly I am not."

Lilla was going to make—nay, had actually made, and in very spirited fashion, too—a great sacrifice for her mother; but she could not keep from occasionally snubbing her. Good Mrs. Lyndon was sometimes a trying dispensation to a quick, impatient young woman; indeed, she was one of those good people who seem made to be snubbed.

She came up herself presently, looking very shaky and flustered.

"We're going away; we're all breaking-up, Emanuel," she said, looking inquiringly at me. "Lilla's going in the morning."

"I know, Mrs. Lyndon."

"It seems sudden, don't it? And we were just getting all to rights here, after such trouble and difficulty and work. But Lilla thinks it's for the best."

"Yes, mamma; we've argued the point already quite enough, I think."

"She won't give in to her uncle, Emanuel; although you know that he's been so good to her."

"Stuff, mamma! Now do stop, there's a good woman."

"And you've heard something else, Emanuel?—Have you told him, Lilly?"

"Oh yes, mamma—yes."

"She's refused him, although he is so good and kind, and so fond of her. Of course he is not what I should have liked, and what I should once have thought only right and proper for Lilla to have. She ought to be a lady, and of course Mr. Lambert isn't the sort of a person one had a right to expect. Oh dear, there was a time when, if any one had told me that a person in his position would have thought of asking my Lilla to marry him, I shouldn't have thought he could be in his senses—I shouldn't indeed! But you know, after all, people must yield to their circumstances; and what I say is, I never knew a better or more worthy young man—and doing so well, too. I do think it's a pity; but Lilla's so willful."

"I suppose I was always willful, mamma, wasn't I?"

"Yes, my own, that you were; and such a troublesome girl, many a time."

"Yet you were always fond of me, you dear old woman."

"Fond of you, my love? Ah, fond is no name for it!"

"Well, then, you will continue to be fond of me still, though I am much more willful now than ever. Besides, if I was always so, it isn't much use trying to be any thing else now. 'What's bred in the bone,' mother; and all the rest of it."

Lilla was doing her best to carry it lightly, saucily off. The effort was not very successful.

"Have you advised at all with Mr. Temple, Lilla?" And the mother threw an appealing glance at me.

"I have, mamma." And the daughter threw an appealing glance at me.

"Yes, Mrs. Lyndon, I have talked with Lilla. I did at first speak to her as you have done; that is, to something like the same effect. I did think she might have married poor Ned Lambert at once, instead of postponing it. But I must say that she has spoken to me in a way which shows me that she has clear and strong reasons, and a feeling that we must not try to counteract. You must let her have her way, Mrs. Lyndon. I think we may trust her that she is guided right; and I hope and believe I shall see her and you, and Ned Lambert too, happy, quite happy, before long."

"If it please God," said Mrs. Lyndon, with a half querulous sigh, which seemed to say that one couldn't always rely upon Providence to do exactly the sort of thing one wanted.

"You don't mean to see him again, Lilla?" I said, turning back as I was about to leave them for the night; "not in the morning, before you go?"

"Oh no, Emanuel; it would do no good. I don't want him to know until after I am gone. You will give him this little packet, please, from me; it's only a poor little keepsake; and you may tell him, if you like, how sorry I was for going; and you will put it in the best light you can, and make him see that it can't be helped. And you may tell him, if you like, of my gratitude to him, and—and—of my unchanging love."

She fairly broke down at last into sobs, and signed for me to leave her.

I left her with deep regret, and sympathy, and pity. I confess it seemed to me that she was making a needless and Quixotic sacrifice; but from her point of view what she was doing was clearly right, and I could not but admire the quiet, resolute spirit with which she had chosen her way and walked whither it led her. I felt in this regard a thorough admiration for her. A sort of pariah myself, I always feel a special and natural pride in any brave good deed done by one of my caste. It is the business and the inheritance of the Brahmins to be brave and good, and to think no little of their own bravery and goodness; and they do not want the admiration of such as I am. But when the courage and virtue are shown by one of those from whom we do not expect any thing of the kind, then I am inclined to wave my cap and cheer. We hear of all sorts of self-sacrifice in books, and even in real life; some of it of a

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very stony, implacable, and self-tormenting kind, which I at least can not find it in my heart either to love or pity, but only shudder at, and pray to be kept forever out of the presence of its silent icy rebuke and self-assertion. Self-sacrifice is indeed the model and pet virtue of the age; and some of us are always inclined to rebel against models and pets. Moreover, it is almost always exhibited by somebody from whom it is naturally to be expected—the *noblesse* of whose virtue, personal and inherited, obliges its owner to such deeds of devotion; it is done under the impulse of lofty religious inspirings, it is preached up by good and authorized preachers, it is sanctified with holy texts, it is illumined and encouraged by hopes of everlasting reward, and the eternal society of harps and seraphs. My poor little London pagan had no such stimulants and encouragements. Her sacrifice was not made as a slave performs a duty, or as a courtier denies himself now that he may have the greater thanks hereafter. It was altogether the impulse of native honor and nobleness and love—above all, love. It thought of no reward, here or beyond; it was all sacrifice. It was foolish, perhaps, in one sense; but there are some of us in whose eyes even Virtue looks most attractive when she is a little irregular and unorthodox in her ways.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"THOU HAST IT, ALL!"

So our dreams had come true at last; our wildest hopes had been realized. We had both succeeded. Christina and I sang together during the remainder of that season at the best house. She was the great success and idol of the hour; I was, in my own way, a success too—greater than I had ever expected. Just think of the changes time had worked for me with unthought-of liberality. Only a little while ago I was poor—horribly, bitterly poor; a man to whom the fare of a hansom was an expense to be avoided and fought against. Now I had, for a bachelor, plenty of money, and spent sovereigns heedlessly where even two years ago I dared not lay out shillings. Now I had a name that was known pretty well every where—that is, where people talk about singing. Now I was once more restored to the society of Christina. We sang together; our names were constantly and of necessity coupled. I saw her almost every night. We were applauded together; I led her before the curtain at every recall; I gathered up her bouquets for her. On the stage I was always associated with her; off the stage I could see her when I pleased. We were now in very reality swimming together, and side by side—the success we used to dream of and rave about years ago.

Was ever mortal so blessed of the gods as I?

Let me answer in a sentence. My life was unhappy, and I was sinking every day in my own estimation deeper and deeper. I was becoming demoralized.

I have already said that during my long separation from Christina her memory was my preservation from any thing mean or low or degrading. How did it happen that association with her now seemed to produce just the opposite effect?

To begin with, I could not any longer understand either her or myself. She was no longer my Lisette. All the freshness of her nature appeared to have been washed away. Her soul seemed somehow to have contracted; the brand of the world was on her. The bloom was off her cheek, and, as I believed, off her heart. Yet she fascinated me as she did others; and I clung to her, and walked in her shadow, and was unhappy without her, and unhappy and disappointed with her.

Except when on the stage. There, and only there, I saw my Christina. I have avoided, and shall avoid, a cold and lengthened description of her as a singer and an actress. But she delighted me, and, I could have almost said, she surprised me. Her voice was as it had always been, more remarkable perhaps for its clear, bright, vibrating strength than for the softer and sweeter tones; but the great charm about her was the perfect unity and harmony of her acting and her singing. She did not quite belong to that grand and classical line of singers which seems for the present to have closed with Grisi; neither had she any thing in common with the school of the pretty musical humming-top, the warbling butterfly, which is just now our pet ideal. Her voice and her style expressed romantic, not classic, passion and love and tragedy. She was always a woman; never a goddess. But her whole soul was infused into what she sung. She was to the grand classic singers what Victor Hugo is to Racine. Into mere piquancy and prettiness she never degenerated.

I admired her greatly, wholly. In every thing she did there was the unmistakable presence of genius. But when I strove to criticise her calmly, putting myself into the position, as well as I could, of the average public, and asked myself, "Will her fame last?" I was forced to reply, "I do not think so."

In the first place, she was not careful of her voice. She exerted its powers with a generous carelessness, a splendid indiscretion. Each time she appeared on the stage she seemed to have said to herself, "This night I will do my very best, no matter what my state of health or strength: let to-morrow care for itself."

But, again, I doubted for the permanence of her noble, natural, thrilling style in its hold on public favor. It was not the lofty, the goddess-like, the terrible, which made other great singers irresistible in their power; and it had nothing to do with the saucy fascinations and joyous little nightingale trillings which set vulgar audiences, no matter how high their social

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rank, into ecstasies. There was neither terror nor trick about it.

It was difficult for me to criticise even thus far, for I hung upon her voice and her successes like the most devoted lover. The first time we sang together I was almost indifferent about my own success, so completely was I wrapped up in hers.

On the stage, then, she was all I could have expected, the very danger which I feared for her coming only from the truth and integrity of her artistic genius. But the moment she ceased to be a lyric queen and became Christina Reichstein—I could hardly now call her, even to myself, Christina Braun—she disappointed me while she most fascinated me. I had to go away from her in order to bring the true Christina back into my mind.

She coquetted with any body—every body who paid her homage—with, for a long time, one exception, myself. Of course I hung on to her like an idiot; I did indeed still passionately love her; but it was a long time before one glance of encouragement invited me on. Understand that this in itself was often to me a flattering and a maddening incitement. She seemed, I sometimes thought, to hold me apart from all the rest—seemed to say, "I may flirt with others and play with them, but not with *you*. We stand on different ground. We must be lovers—or nothing." I now believe Christina acted in this from a high deliberate motive; I do believe she thought the memory of our past too sacred to be profaned by any contact with the commonplace and frivolous flirtations in which it was sometimes her humor to indulge. Then I thought, according to my mood, that she was resolved to repel me utterly, or resolved to make me her slave; and I sometimes adored and sometimes hated her.

Perhaps I might have taken heart of grace and broken loose altogether from her, and stood up and been free, but for the expression with which I sometimes—only sometimes—caught her eye resting on mine. Old, sweet, sad memories seemed to shine in it, and to bring our hearts together for the moment once again. This happened more often when we were on the stage than at any other time. Always the moment my eye thus met hers she turned away, and her expression and manner changed; and when next I met her she was sure to be colder than ever to me, and perhaps to be more ostentatiously friendly than ever to somebody else whom I especially disliked. There were many whom I disliked on her account, believing one week that she surely cared about them, and finding out the week after that she held them in the most absolute and supreme indifference.

Thus, then, the season mooned away. Thus it came about that, though I had succeeded, was the tenor of the season, and at the best house; sang with Christina Reichstein, helped toward her success, and shared it; saw her frequently off the stage—she received her friends at her lodgings in Jermyn Street on Sunday evenings, and one or two off afternoons in the week—was a constant visitor, and perhaps ought to be very happy—I was distracted, disappointed, and miserable.

What on earth was the reason why I so hated to see Christina acting and singing with any body but myself? What was it to me? Nevertheless I always felt keenly annoyed when the chances of the situation flung her literally into the arms of some stout basso, who probably felt no emotion whatever except anxiety about his own part, and its effect on the audience. She acted with such genuine and artistic effect that I sometimes became ridiculously annoyed. She clasped her operatic fathers and lovers with a clasp apparently as fervent and impassioned as if they were genuine fathers or lovers, or only lay and feelingless figures. She never thought of them at the moment, as I knew well who had to embrace her publicly a dozen times a week perhaps, and knew how utterly absorbed in her lyrical art, and how absolutely indifferent to me, she was all the time.

It would be idle to deny that stories of her past life were whispered about which it was torture to hear, even though I knew that there was no word of truth in them. I was got into a silly row with a fellow who named the very year in which he knew, he said, that she was living, *au cinquième* in a house in the Quartier Latin, with a young artist whom she afterward threw over, and who accordingly took to absinthe, and finally to the Montmartre Cemetery. The story-teller fixed upon the very year before Christina's father died, and when she was living peaceably and working hard, for a girl, in our quiet old town by the sea—before ever she had set foot on Paris pavement. I hardly ever, indeed, heard any story, good or bad, told about her which my own personal and certain knowledge did not enable me to contradict. One reason for this was, that so far as her recent years—her years of growing celebrity—were concerned, nobody had a word to say against her. Her life had left no opening for suspicion, or even for calumny. But a beautiful and attractive woman in that line of life, who has cruelly sinned by her sudden and signal success, must have done wrong some time or other, you know; and as there is nothing to be said against her during the years which were passed under our own observation and those of our associates, the inference is obvious—the error must have been committed in the obscurer years before we came to know any thing about her. Therefore three out of every four of the stories whispered about her referred to those old dear early days when her life surely was one of the calmest and purest that even a German girl could live.

There was apparently some mystery about her marriage. That she was married appeared to be certain; most people said she was a widow. Ned Lambert did not know; he said he always took it for granted that she had married the Italian who had her educated and brought

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out, and that he had died, or they had separated somehow. This was the only scrap of mystery—if it was mystery—about her; and she lived an open, frank, and fearless life, absolutely like one who had nothing to conceal. A steady, elderly German woman always lived with her; a woman of some intelligence and education, with a great eye for artistic make-up, and a good business memory—a sort of compound of poor relation, paid companion, and lady's-maid.

Christina never talked to any body of her past life, or indeed much of herself at all. She had a great many friends, and was free, friendly, and joyous with most of them.

I made slight allusions several times to the old town of her early life and mine; but she did not seem inclined to go back to any such memories, although she showed not the slightest embarrassment on the subject. Once, at last, when I had again made allusion to it, she seated herself at the piano and sang, as her only answer—I believe to an air of her own composition—a little ill-humored ballad by a German poetess, whose name I now forget, expressing entire disregard and contempt for all the associations of the poetess's native town and early days, except for the memory of an old tree which pleasantly shaded her childhood. I ceased after that to say any word which might remind her of that past from which she had evidently made up her mind to be wholly severed.

What I detested most was to see her haunted by the presence of Mr. Lyndon, M.P. He was always in attendance on her; and I hated him. He ignored my existence when he could; I avoided meeting him when I could. There was something about his manner to me which was always strangely irritating; all the more so because there was nothing in it on which a man could reasonably found any cause of offense. His manner ever seemed to say, "*You* are not a person to be received by me as an equal. I know what you were, and that is what I always choose to think you. Others may regard you as a successful artist, and so, being like myself professed patrons of art, may admit you to their intimacy. I don't choose to see your success, or to care about it. You may be tolerated by Madame Reichstein; that is no reason why you should be tolerated by me. I may make myself a slave to her openly and ostentatiously; that is no reason why I should be so condescending to *you*." I am afraid there was something mean in my dislike of him; my detestation of his cold arrogance, his insolent money-pride, his bearing even among those of our artist's circle whom he specially favored. His very homage to Christina I thought had something offensive in its ostentation. It always seemed to say, "Behold what so great and grand a personage as I can do for beauty and art! I can come down from my serene respectability and be the cavalier in service of a singing-woman."

Christina, however, did not seem to regard his attentions in that light. She encouraged him, flattered him, trifled with him, coquetted with him; sometimes had long and serious talks with him in the corners of crowded rooms. He took her to the Ladies' Gallery to hear the debates on nights when there was no opera. He hardly ever spoke himself, or intended to do so; but he was a steadfast Whig party-man; and people said ministers thought a great deal of him, and that he might have been in office if he liked. He was often on the platform—sometimes in the chair—at Bible-society meetings and missionary meetings; and he was dead against opening places of amusement—or even the British Museum—on Sundays. He had his vices, but they were very quiet and decorous. His looks and his ways with women—the women I usually saw him with—had a cold, consuming sensuousness about them which I thought detestable. He had been married twice, and now had long been a widower; and he had the repute of being the very best of fathers, especially devoted to his younger daughter, who never thwarted him, as her rigidly religious sisters did, on the score of his operas and his singers and his liking for the ballet. I never could quite understand how a man could be greatly devoted to his daughter, and wholly unscrupulous as regarded her sex in general. But it seemed Mr. Lyndon was so. People admired him for the former peculiarity, and thought none the worse of him for the latter. He was commonly set down as an excellent man, of great ability and influence; and most persons paid court to him accordingly.

He was, I discovered, a great patron of revolution. Refugees from disturbed continental countries were constantly seeking him out and being taken up and patronized by him. Christina, too, seemed always interested in that sort of thing; and they evidently used to have semi-official conferences about it. Observing this, I of course began to detest and despise all continental refugees; to regard them as humbugs, like Mr. Lyndon, and to think oppressed nationalities nuisances and shams. I could not believe that Christina really cared much about such business; and for Mr. Lyndon I set it down at once that he had no other interest in it but that it ministered to his own consequence and importance. In fact, he was a patron, and only kind or even civil to those who approached him as such—except, of course, women, who, when they were good-looking, carried claims of their own about with them which commended them to Mr. Lyndon's attention. Moreover, he seemed to take a sort of pleasure in watching the smallness of human nature even in those he paid court to; and he laughed a short and sharp little laugh over any small humiliation to which his closest favorite might happen to be put.

Thus the man presented himself to my observation. I never knew any thing worse of him than just what I have told or indicated;

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but I strongly disliked him; and as, thank Heaven, I never approached him as one approaches a patron, or recognized his right of patronage, he never was any thing better than coldly civil to me—and not even that when he could with decency avoid it. If afterward I may have pained or injured the man, not quite without malice, I may at least explain why it was that from the first and to the last I detested and despised him.

Christina sometimes gave suppers at her rooms (please to remember that I am describing the ways of ten or a dozen years ago), and I used to meet some of her sister-singers there, and one or two military men, and a few of the leading critics, whom no actor or singer is ever indifferent about conciliating. I was generally found at these gatherings, chiefly because, although I hated to be there, I could not help myself, and had not the spirit to stay away. They seemed to me entirely frivolous, hollow, heartless. Christina herself appeared to have sunk quite down to the level of her surroundings. The conversation was for the most part mere gabble and gossip and satire. Every one paid court to the ruling artists who happened to be present by sneering at their absent rivals. Hostile critics were denounced and no doubt calumniated. Stories were told of the presents made by such a tenor to such a critic to explain the tremendous puffs with which this or that journal, defying all audiences and musical science and common-sense, flamed in the forehead of the morning sky. Counter-insinuations were made about the diamond rings, and other temptations yet more bewitching, with which this or that soprano or contralto had vainly sought to corrupt the impregnable honor of another critic who happened to be one of the company.

The literary gentlemen did not appear to have much more *esprit de corps* than the singers. If the latter babbled all manner of hissing stories against their rivals, the former listened complacently and even assentingly to the keenest insinuations against the honor and the trust-worthiness of brother critics. The critics seemed to have an enormous estimate of their own power; and not an unreasonable estimate, judging from the court paid to them by those who ought to be best able to appreciate their influence. No one seemed to think much about the public at all. It was quite a matter between the artists and the critics. If these approved of and wrote up those, the thing seemed to be done.

From my own point of view it did not thus appear to me. I had always relied on the audience rather than on the critics, and indeed had been somewhat ignored by the latter. I owe them no ill-will on that account. Frankly, they were right. Even then I had arrived at a very fair estimate of my own merits. I knew even then that I had a voice and nothing else. My soul was not in the art; and I felt satisfied that some time or other this must be found out by the public. I was quite aware that I had not one ray of the inspiration which lighted the soul and the eyes of Christina Reichstein in some of her great parts. I knew that I was little better than a musical automaton; but I was a success with the audiences for all that. The opera-house and the concert-room filled for me; and had my voice only endured I must have made a fortune. The critics could not do much to serve me; and they seemed rather too puzzled by my success to go boldly in for attacking me.

One evening I remember in particular. Some dozen or so supped at Christina's rooms. It so happened that this night she took hardly any notice of me—certainly distinguished me in no way from the most commonplace of her ordinary visitors. Mr. Lyndon sat at her right hand, and paid her devoted and undisguised attention, which she took with a quiet assent that half-maddened me. On her left sat a distinguished critic and *littérateur*, who had written successful plays and successful novels, published capital translations of various foreign works, edited scientific volumes, compiled biographies, and even varied the more laborious occupations of his life by appearing occasionally as an amateur actor. He had an astonishing power of conversation; he could talk with marvelous fluency and vivacity on all subjects, and almost in all European languages. To this gentleman Christina always intimated that she owed a great deal. He had been, it would appear, one of the first to note and to welcome her success. He was, too, as I afterward heard from her many a time, one of the few who understood that she was something more than a mere singer. Indeed, the criticisms he had published about her did show a deep and genuine appreciation of all those qualities of her voice, her lyric style, her dramatic power, which were most truly great and peculiar. There was nothing in him which was not apparently sincere and manly. It did not even then surprise me that he had manifested no particular admiration for *my* genius and merits. He had taken my success, such as it was, quietly, and as one whom nothing on the part of the public could astonish; and he had said nothing ill-natured, or satirical, or even distinctly depreciatory of me, only said just as little of me as might be—habitually recorded the fact that I won applause, and so let me go on my way.

Ordinarily I should have felt little of anger toward any body who, like myself, did not think me a great singer. But this particular night I felt altogether out of humor with myself, and naturally therefore inclined to be put easily out of humor with every body else. I was beginning of late (for reasons to be more fully explained presently) to doubt myself, to suspect that I was capable of playing a mean and ignoble part, to look on myself as capable of servile love and low-minded rancor. I was beginning to be ashamed of my slavish hanging after Christina's skirts, and to feel abashed and perplexed by

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other weaknesses too. I thought I saw myself sinking, and that others too must see it. So I came prepared, despising myself, to resent any slight from another.

I soon became exasperated when I saw that to the critic I have spoken of Madame Reichstein ostentatiously paid special attention this night. She flirted with him in the most fearless and determined manner; it appeared to me, with some definite purpose: whether for the discomfiture of myself or Mr. Lyndon I could not determine. The critic, who had flirted doubtless with all the *prima donnas* of the previous ten years, entered very vivaciously into the game, and of course took it in precisely the spirit in which it was started. But I chose to be deeply offended; and the more deeply I drank for comfort and desperation. I paid extravagant attention to a little Frenchwoman (a new singer) beside me, who was herself drinking Champagne with amazing zest. I either saw, or thought I saw, some smiles passing around at both of us, and especially it seemed to me that a look of surprise and contempt came up on the face of Christina's pet critic. Impelled by Heaven knows what idiotic impulse, I jumped on my feet and proceeded to address the astonished little company. I complained that I had been insulted; I poured out some frantic nonsense, especially composed of denunciations of critics and literary men. I saw Mr. Lyndon raise his double eye-glass, survey me coolly for a moment, and then drop his glass and resume his conversation with his neighbor, as if nothing I could do ought to be surprising or worth any particular notice. Looks of anger, contempt, pity, or disgust were on every face, and one I could see even then wore an expression of such surprise and shame and sorrow, that it might almost have brought me back to my senses.

I believe I displaced the mirth, broke the good meeting. But I really am not quite certain how the matter ended, except that I was assisted to a cab by a brother artist and the very critic I had been so absurdly denouncing. And I have a pretty clear idea, as shame flashed a gleam of consciousness over me, that I heard the former say to the latter: "Never saw him like this before, I'm sure; can't think what came over him. He is a very good fellow generally, I can assure you."

And the critic replied: "Yes; I have no doubt he is a good fellow, and he has an uncommonly fine voice; but what a confounded fool he must be!"

CHAPTER XIX.

SWEARING ETERNAL FRIENDSHIP.

BITTERLY and severely did I echo next morning the opinion of my friend the critic. What a confounded fool I had made of myself! was the first thought present to my mind. How *she* must have despised me! How steadily I had been sinking of late! This proof, the most grotesque and ridiculous humiliation I had ever been put to, was perhaps not the sharpest proof of a lowered nature which pricked my conscience.

For I had yet a conscience and a sense of honor. I have read somewhere a story of a prince to whom a loving fairy gave a magical ring, which was to be his guide and guard through life. Whenever he did wrong, the ring was to prick his finger—sharply, in proportion to the magnitude of his fault. He erred and erred; was pricked and pricked. At last he could not stand the thing any longer; and so he angrily plucked the ring off his finger and flung it away. For a while he was perfectly happy, and could do as he liked unpricked of conscience. But of course I need not say that he went to the bad utterly—unless, perhaps, the fairy came in and somehow redeemed him in the end. Now I had not thrown away my ring, and I felt its sharp pressure very keenly even if I had not conscience and spirit enough to do right, and thus avoid its censure.

Two things, at all events, I must do. I must make an humble apology to Christina, and another to Mr. Levison, the critic. The latter gave me no troubling thought; I knew he would receive it like a gentleman, and, indeed, that he was not likely in any case to feel much about the matter. But to meet Madame Reichstein and talk of my shame to her was something quite different—something I dreaded. Perhaps I dreaded it none the less because I saw how altered were our relations now; and I expected from her none of that tender, forgiving interest with which women who care for us as lovers, or brothers, or friends, are only too happy to anticipate our penitence and cover our humiliation.

It had to be done, however; and with an aching head and dogged heart I set about doing it. I lived now, since the Lyndons had left London, in the same house with Edward Lambert. We had taken lodgings together in Brompton; and though our hours and ways differed so much that I sometimes did not meet him for whole days together, we were still friendly as ever, with only one or two subjects on which we suspended, rather than withheld, reciprocal confidence. All this I shall presently come to; for the moment I pass it by.

This particular morning I was glad not to see him; I did not want to talk to any body. I dressed myself as carefully and well as I could; but it seemed, as I nervously and often scrutinized my appearance, that I could not get a certain dissipated and rowdy look out of my eyes and hair. All that tubbing, and sponging, and brushes, and pomade, and perfumery could do was done energetically; but I still thought the rowdy look remained, like the blood-spots on Lady Macbeth's hands or Bluebeard's key. My soul sickened at the thought of breakfast. I

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rejected eggs and toast and kidneys, and would not look at the *Times*. When something like a reasonable hour had approached, I started on my errand, and walked to Jermyn Street.

When I stood at the door, this soft and sunny noon, I could not but think of the drear and dripping night when, prouder of soul and purer of heart than now, I stood at this same door and sought Christina in vain. Since then I had many times crossed the threshold, but never sought to speak with her alone and face to face. If we were to speak together now, in a room alone, it would be for the first time since the night when she called a farewell to me, and the rose dropped from her bosom.

I sent up my card, was invited to come up, and I found her alone.

The room was small, elegant, with nothing even in the graceful carelessness of its appearance to remind one of the profession. Every thing was quiet, unpretentious, and even homely-looking. Christina had been playing on the piano and singing in a low tone as I came; and when I entered the room she had just turned round and was rising to meet me. She was dressed in a morning-robe of purple cashmere, or some such material, with a white rose in her bosom. The color of the dress made her bright complexion, luxuriant fair hair, and deep dark eyes look even more striking and dazzling than they were wont to do, and her hair now fell around her as unconfined and careless as when it used to rouse the spinster-like anger of good Miss Griffin in the choir long ago. Rising from the piano, she threw back her hair with one hand and with an impatient toss of the head, and then held out her other hand to me. She scarcely looked up, and our eyes did not meet.

"You see," she said, with a smile, "how entirely without ceremony I receive you. My hair is in terrible disarray; but if you will make such early morning calls what can one do?"

"I ought to apologize to you for coming, and I would do so if I had not so much more serious an apology to make. I am ashamed of myself, Madame Reichstein, and of the world; and, most of all, of *you*."

"What an alarming preface! What have you done?"

"It is useless kindness, Madame Reichstein, to profess ignorance. You know only too well what I have done to shame myself, and what I have come to apologize for. Don't, Christina, don't force me to think you have really lost all interest in me by telling me that you were not angry with me, or ashamed of me, for what happened last night."

I had till now been standing, and Christina had not left her music-stool. While I was speaking she rose and came toward me.

"Emanuel," she said, gravely, "I am glad to hear you speak in this way. I am glad indeed; and I will not go on in the tone I tried to take. I *was* angry with you for—for what happened last night. I was angry, and deeply pained, and ashamed — on your account. I could not recognize you last night; but I am glad to believe you could not recognize yourself, and my mind is much relieved. I have thought of it ever since; but now, if you bid me, I will think of it no more. You are not changed, Emanuel? Not really changed, I mean? You have not allowed the world to corrupt you? There was a word or two which used to be favorite with you once—about keeping the whiteness of the soul. You have kept the whiteness of your soul, *nicht wahr?*"

She spoke with a friendly, confiding tenderness and frankness, as unlike her ordinary manner now as my drunken display of the previous night could be to my penitent sadness of this morning.

"I hope I have not changed wholly, Christina. I hope so. But times have changed, and most people round me; and I sometimes think and fear that I have been allowing myself to sink into something of which once I should have been ashamed."

She laid her hand gently on mine.

"Emanuel, I too fear it. I have watched you closely—from friendship, believe me; and I do fear that you are allowing yourself to—well, not to improve."

"Can you wonder at it?" I interrupted her, in bitter tone. "What have I to care for? Why should I care for myself? If I have changed, have not you changed? Are you the same that you were? Do I not see that you can fling yourself into a frivolous and foolish life?"

"Do you want answers to all these questions, Emanuel?"

"No, I don't; I have no right to ask them. I have nothing to do with your way of living, or your friends, or the people you allow to hang after you, or the reports that other people spread about—I want no answer, Christina; but when you reproach me with having changed, and sunk, and all that, I can only—"

"Tell me to look at myself, Emanuel, and bring my moral lessons to bear *there*, you were going to say."

"No, I was not going to say that, although—But I was not going to say it, indeed. I was only going to say that I never set up for any thing—for great moral purpose, or nobleness, or virtue, or any of that sort of thing. I take my color—most men do—from the hues of those around them. You, Christina, were my dream for long, long years; and you know it. Well, I am awake; and I can't pretend to be dreaming any more. We are all poor creatures, I suppose; and I accept the situation, and don't set up to be any better than my neighbors. I am heartily ashamed of what I said and did last night, and I apologize profoundly for it. I offended you, and insulted your guests, and made a beast and a brute of myself; and it is very kind of you to receive me at all after such a scandal. But for the rest I have not much to say. I have not improved of late; and that's all."

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I could not keep back the bitterness of my soul; it found relief, and I was not sorry. Christina did not wince, however; no, not in the least.

"Emanuel, *zwischen uns sei Wahrheit.* You remember the old scene in *Iphigenia?* Between us be the truth! You think I have greatly changed, and for the worse?"

I made no answer.

"Come, speak out!" she said, impatiently. "You think I have become worldly, and frivolous, and cunning, don't you?"

"Sometimes I do, Christina."

"I asked you when we met for the first time—I mean the first time since long ago—not to judge me merely from the outside. I don't show to advantage, and I don't always want to; but I don't wish to lose your good opinion wholly, Emanuel; the more as you seem to make my falling off a sort of excuse for your own. Come," she said, and she sat in a chair and pointed me to another—"come and tell me my faults. Be a friend, and speak out. I have spoken frankly to you."

"To-day, just for this moment, you have."

"To-morrow, perhaps, I shall be cold and careless and frivolous; very likely I shall seem so. *You*, I might have thought, could judge a little better than by mere seemings. Well, will you tell me my faults?"

"No; and I have not been speaking of faults; only of the change that seems to have come over you."

"Then I will speak for you. You think I have no heart and no memory, and no care for any thing but flattery and excitement?"

"I have lately thought so."

"Then you are wrong, Emanuel; indeed, indeed you are. I have a sort of part to play, and I must play it. I do not deny that I love praise and excitement; but I could have loved other things better; and I still am no more in heart what you commonly see me than I am Amina or Leonora."

"Why do you keep that old man hanging after you?"

"I might reply by another question, and say, What right have you to ask? I might evade the question for a moment, as most women would, I think, and innocently ask, What old man? But I suppose of course you mean Mr. Lyndon. Well, Mr. Lyndon has long been an intimate friend of mine, and—"

"And is likely soon to be more, people say."

"Do they? How kind people are! What do they say?"

"Well, five out of every six say you will marry him."

She smiled.

"Indeed! And the sixth—who I suppose has reason to know better—what does he say on the subject?"

"Even he, I think, knows no particular reason to the contrary."

"Do *you* know no reason to the contrary?"

"None whatever."

"Then you know nothing of my life for the past few years?"

"Nothing. Except, of course, what all the world knows."

She sighed audibly.

"I am glad of it," she said; "you shall know it all some time—before long, perhaps, but not now. For a while, Emanuel, take me on trust; I am better than I seem. Listen, and I will speak to you as I never meant to speak to you again. Your good opinion is dear to me. Your friendship I would have if I could. Once, Emanuel, I loved you better than all things on earth, except—see how frank I am!—except success."

I could not repress a groan; and I rose from my chair and turned partly away.

"But I always dreamed of that success with you. And you loved me; but not so deeply and wholly—no, don't speak; if I am stayed now I shall never be able to continue—not so deeply as I would have had. We went our ways, hoping to meet again before it should be too late. We did not so meet; it was too late. When I wrote to you in London, Emanuel, it was too late."

"No, no, Christina—no, by Heaven! It was the idlest chance, the purest delusion, the error of a kindly, well-meaning friend that made you think—"

"All that I have since learned or guessed. But I did not and could not know it then; and you kept yourself hidden away until I hated you and myself for the unwomanly advance I had made, and the silence that followed it."

"I never knew, I never dreamed, that Mlle. Reichstein was Christina Braun; and I was poor and obscure and hopeless, a beggar without a name."

"Well, it is vain talking; let all that be laid aside. It is now too late, and Providence has kindly ordered it for the best. I have only brought back all this that I may say one thing for myself. I have chosen another part in life, and I mean to play it faithfully and loyally to the end. Therefore, Emanuel, I have kept back from you, and received you not even as a friend. If we were friends, you might come to know in time why I do things which appear to you now strange. I can not have you think badly of me. Your word, Emanuel; can we be friends?"

She held her hand out frankly, and her eyes met mine.

"You do not speak. Will you be my friend? Your word, and I shall expect that, once pledged, it shall be as your oath. Will you be my friend?"

I could not answer for a moment; I could not answer unconditionally at all. For half a life I had loved her; lately I had almost hated her. How could I in a moment promise to subside into pure and enduring friendship? I saw that in her eyes there came a look of anxiety and pity and pathos. She leaned now on the chimney-piece, and looked steadfastly at me.

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"Christina," I answered at last, and in tones that only struggled to be calm and clear, "I will do my best; I will indeed. That is my promise."

She held her hand out again, and I raised it and touched it with my lips. I noticed that it was the left hand, and I saw the plain hoop of gold on the third finger.

Her eyes too fell upon it; and she colored and looked embarrassed. She glanced at me doubtingly, inquiringly, as one who considers whether the time has not come to make some confession. I wish I had allowed her or encouraged her to speak; but I did not. I had little doubt that there was some painful story—I would not call it secret—connected with her past life; either that she had lost by death a husband whom she loved, or had been separated from one who was not worthy of her. In either case I shrank with keen sensitiveness from provoking a confidence which must be painful. Despite my pledge of friendship just made, I could not speak to Christina of her husband. I rose to take my leave.

"We understand each other, Emanuel, again; do we not?" she asked, hesitatingly.

"Better at least than before, Christina."

"And you will not, I hope and pray, throw away your time and your prospects on—on folly and people unworthy of you."

"Some kind friend, Christina, has evidently been telling good-natured tales of me."

"No; but I have heard, and I have even myself observed, things that grieved me."

"Well, Christina, I mean to reform. I hope to become a model member of society; almost, perhaps, like your friend Mr. Lyndon."

"You talk lightly and bitterly. It pains me to hear you."

"Forgive me; I will not talk lightly or bitterly if I can. I do mean to improve. I am not nearly so bad, Christina, as some of my friends or yours appear to think. But I am ashamed of myself; and I will try to take up again the broken threads of my life. I confess that I find life sometimes rather bitter and barren; and I don't well know what particular gain one has from living and struggling at all."

"Nor I, Emanuel, sometimes. But we still live, my dear; and we must do our best to make life worth having. Do you think life is more of a restraint and a disappointment to you than to me? Do you think you have less to hope for or more to strive against in every way than I have? Are you the only one who has to crush down warm and dear feelings? Ah no, Emanuel! There are others who are more tried, and have less chance of escaping. Hush!—don't speak; did you hear nothing?"

She went to the window and looked out. It opened casement-fashion, and I saw that she was about to throw it open and apparently to step out on the little balcony in front; but she checked herself, and after a mere glance into the street, drew cautiously back. Her face was very pale when she turned to me, and her eyes shone with a lustre the more striking.

I was about to speak, but she raised her hand to enjoin silence. I remained silent, and without moving. The street outside was singularly quiet. It seemed as if sleeping in the hot glare of the sun. From where I stood I could see through the window only a part of the far side of the street. There was no life stirring there; not even a hurdy-gurdy was heard. For the few seconds we remained silent not a cab rattled down the street. In the room nothing was heard but the ticking of the little gilt clock on the chimney-piece. When, as we stood and looked at each other, a piano-string suddenly snapped, the clang came so loud and sharp on the ear that Christina positively started.

Then, in the silence which followed, I heard—just what I had heard before, in fact, as Christina broke off our conversation—three bars of what seemed to be an operatic air, but which was certainly unfamiliar to me, whistled in the street below. The whistle was of a somewhat peculiar kind, shrill and sibilating; and the whistler stopped suddenly short at one particular note each time; almost as a bird does which is trying to learn some air from its master, and can not get over some difficult turn, and so stops and begins again. I marked all this now because my ears and senses were on the stretch for something; otherwise I should never have paid any attention to it, or perhaps even been aware of the sound at all. It was, however, the only sound to be heard; and it was clear that Christina was listening to it with all her ears.

Her face, from paleness, had grown to a deep flush of excitement, and her lips quivered visibly. When the whistling had the second time reached the same note she sighed audibly, as with profound resignation or profound relief, one could not tell which.

"Has any thing happened?" I asked.

"Oh yes; something has happened. Something very unexpected. I must ask you to leave me, Emanuel."

"Two words only. Nothing bad?"

"No; something good—very good. I did not expect it yet. I ought to be deeply thankful; I am thankful. Good-morning, Emanuel. Please don't ask me any more; and don't stay."

She was all trembling, and quite eager and excited. I obeyed her and put no further questions, but hurried from the room. Just as I was leaving, her German companion or follower came in, looking excited too, but seemingly in a wholly joyous sense. She came like one who brings good news.

When I reached the street I could see nobody on either side of it who seemed likely to have been the mysterious whistler. A man was wheeling a barrowful of fruit, wrapped in blue papers, along toward the St. James's Street end. A policeman was tramping the other way. A girl, with a roll of music in her hand, and petticoats high kilted, passed close to me. Other human beings near at hand I could not see. It

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did not seem likely that any one of those I had seen could have had the faculty of startling Christina by whistling the fag-end of a tune.

CHAPTER XX.

AN EXPLANATION.

THE conversation I had just had with Christina will help still further to explain a little of my past life. It was certain that I had degenerated since the renewal of our acquaintanceship. Life has to be got through somehow after the heaviest disappointment; and not often in real existence can we raise a Rolandseck over the wasted scene of frustrated love and ruined hope, and go and be pious and patient there. It was only after I had met Christina again that the full bitterness of the thought came to me that I had no longer any thing to live for. While we were separated there was always an object, if not a hope. Now there seemed neither. I confess that I sank a little way into a sort of unmeaning joyless dissipation, for which I had naturally no taste, and into which I could not by any possibility throw my soul. The Champagne of the night and the headache of the morning just a little distracted me, and no more. Ned Lambert sometimes shook his honest head and tried a gentle laconic remonstrance; with the usual effect. I have no doubt he spoke to Christina on the subject, and urged her to bring her influence to bear. Perhaps to this I owed the pledge of friendship we had just made.

Any how, the pledge of friendship did not procure me much more of Christina's society, or apparently of her confidence. There was perhaps a warmer pressure of the hand when we met; and there was occasionally a deeper shade of interest and anxiety in her eyes as they rested on me for a moment. Sometimes I fear I only set this down to her dread on the score of my degenerating habits; and I felt rather inclined to resent than to feel grateful for it.

No explanation had come or suggested itself regarding her sudden emotion on the day when our ceremonial of friendship-vowing was so strangely interrupted.

Mr. Lyndon of course often came to the Opera. One night, just about this time, I observed him enter the stalls rather late. He came in along with a tall, thin, dark-bearded, remarkable-looking man—a man with a high forehead, sloping rather back and seamed with premature wrinkles; a man with a face which would have been stern and sharp in its expression but for a certain soft and melancholy sweetness in his liquid, luminous eyes. There was something about this man's appearance which attracted me in an instant; and I could not help thinking it attracted Christina too, for I observed that from time to time she glanced under her eyes in the direction where he and Lyndon sat; and she was too much of a true artist ever to think under ordinary conditions of sending her eyes roaming about the house in search of admiration. If you could have got a boxful of emperors, Christina Reichstein would have scorned to sing at them. So I had some reason for silent surprise when I observed that she did now and then glance quietly in the direction where this man was sitting with his friend. He was, I perceived, usually very marked and emphatic in his applause.

Mr. Lyndon and this man escorted Christina to her little brougham after the Opera. Needless to say that I did not feel much inclined to obtrude myself on such company. Christina saw me, and called a friendly good-night, with two or three words added in German, which bade me see her as early as possible next day. Mr. Lyndon and I exchanged, as usual, a very cold salute.

As I turned away I met a brother artist, whom I saw exchanging a salute a little more friendly with the dark and pale-faced stranger.

"Who's our friend?" I asked, nodding in the direction of the stranger, who had gone with Mr. Lyndon to the carriage of the latter. I threw an immense amount of scorn into my voice; why, I don't know. He to whom I spoke was a Frenchman.

"But I have forgot his name. He is an Italian—indeed, that goes without saying—and he is going to be a lion of your salons here for a season, I am told. He is a patriot; he is an escaped—"

"Convict?"

"Convict—yes; that is, Austrian convict, or at least Austrian prisoner."

"I thought he had a look of Toulon about him."

"Nothing of the sort. You are not *sympathique;* nor I, indeed, no more. He has escaped somehow from Spielberg, or death, or something, and he is going to agitate your country to take up arms for the independence of Italy. And she will! Oh yes; England will spend all her moneys, and her powders and shots, and her cottons, just for a dream."

"But this person?"

"Well, that is all I know. He is a very distinguished man—quite celebrated."

"Whose name you have forgotten."

"Yes, and of whom I never heard before."

"How did you come to know him?"

"Madame Reichstein did me the honor to present me."

"How does *she* know him?"

"Oh, for that, my dear, you must not ask me. Perhaps your Lyndon has taken him in charge."

"Ah, very likely; he patronizes illustrious foreigners a good deal."

"But rather when they are in *jupons* than in pantaloons, is it not?—Where are you going?"

"Home, I think."

"Ridiculous—at this hour! Come and have a game of billiards."

"Thanks—not to-night."

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"Come at least and smoke a pipe."

"No; I can't to-night."

Indeed my pipe was quite put out for that evening. I can not tell how it was that I came to associate the man I had seen in the stalls with the scene in Christina's room the other day; but I did so associate him in my mind at once. When, as she was leaving the theatre, she asked me to come and see her next day—asked me in pressing tones, and in German (we hardly ever spoke German to each other now) —I felt in some strange way that my conjecture was confirmed. I went home moodily, expecting something painful, I hardly knew what.

Christina received me very graciously when I visited her next morning—very graciously and sweetly. There was a pathetic, anxious sort of kindness about her manner which was not usual with her of late. She was embarrassed, too; and her thoughts seemed dwelling on any thing rather than the subject we first talked of. For a few minutes there was indeed an awkward pause every now and then in the conversation we carried on, as if each was expecting the other to put some question or begin some explanation.

We spoke a few words about Ned Lambert and his love, and his separation from Lilla Lyndon, of which Christina appeared to know a good deal. I made some allusion to the one great cause of Lilla's resolution to leave London, and found that Christina seemed to understand or have guessed it.

"That, too, I know," she said. "You speak of the wretched man, Stephen Lyndon?"

"I do."

"I did not know his real name or his real nature until lately." (Here she paused.) "But I don't want to speak of him just now. I have sent for you for another purpose, Emanuel." Another pause—and then she said: "I am going to introduce you to-day to a man whose friend I want you to be; for my sake first, and then for his own. I wish you and him to be friends, and I wish that you should know our secrets. You saw me speak to a tall and dark-haired Italian last night?"

"I did."

"He will come here to-day. He is my husband."

Christina dropped her eyes as she spoke the words, and I was glad that no gaze was on me; for, despite all that had come and gone, this was a heavy shock. Spoken suddenly, firmly, the words seemed to go through me like a rifle-bullet or the thrust of a sword.

Then she looked up again, and a faint sweet smile came over her face, and our eyes met frankly; and she held out her hand to me across the table, as if in obedience to some involuntary and kindly impulse.

I pressed it silently. Thus we sealed our new friendship, and the dream of my boyhood was really over.

After a moment's pause she said: "My husband is an Italian, as you see. His name is Carlo Farini Salaris. He had a title and orders and honors; but he dropped them all because he was disappointed in Charles Albert, and in others too. He had two passions in his life—music and his country. Chance brought him to know me when I was a poor girl—an adventuress, many people would have called me —a beggar almost. He liked my voice; he had faith in me; he had me educated; he brought me out. All that I am he made me. All that I could do for him in return I have done, I am doing."

"I knew that—that you had been married, Christina. I did not know that your husband was living."

"Nor must you know it now. Understand me, it is a secret only known to you, and perhaps one or two others. He has only lately escaped from an Austrian prison, where he was sent for the part he took in Lombard plots and revolutions. He has escaped only, I fear, to take part in other plots. Think how happy the life of his wife must be! I can help him, however, in many ways while I am not known to be his wife. I have carried the fiery cross for him from the Alps to the Straits of Messina, when not even Austrian or Neapolitan police suspected the German soprano of being an emissary of the revolution. Ah, it would be a long and weary tale to tell; it is a sad memory! In this way I hold my life at his disposal, and my happiness. I will plot for him, scheme for him; smile while I know that he is in danger, flirt when every moment I think to hear news of his death. This is the only way in which I can repay him: I owe him all."

"Surely you have given him something that might repay any thing he has done for you?"

"I have given him all I could, Emanuel; and he was generous enough to have confidence in me, and to believe that I would have given him more if I could. Listen, and I will speak to you with a frankness which others might misunderstand, but you will not. I will speak to you as if I were a ghost come back from the grave, to whom the world could no longer have reality, and who had nothing more to do with human hopes, and loves, and misunderstandings, and all the rest of it. Even before I had made a success of any kind, he would have married me, and I would not. *You* know the reason why. I succeeded through him altogether. He pressed me again and again—tenderly, delicately, like a man with a noble nature. I was coming to England. For the first time since I had left it, you understand. He guessed why I was coming, and I told him all."

"All? All of the past, or—"

"I spoke to him as freely as some of his own countrywomen do to their confessor. I told him that I loved you—yes, I am not ashamed to say it now, and I was not then—and that my dearest hope was to find you. And he said, with his melancholy smile, 'Go to England; but if you do not find him, or have any cause to change your purpose, then promise me that you

will come back to me.' I went to England, and you know the rest—Fate was against us."

"Fate was cruelly against *me!*" I said, starting up; "Fate was against *me!* And you too, Christina! You threw me away at a word; you had done so before. Don't tell me of love—you never loved me; you were too glad to escape from me; you had your ambition and your career, and you followed your destiny. Well, I don't blame you, and I am not surprised. Peace be between us for the future, and let us be friends if you will; only do not torture me to no purpose by trying to persuade me that that might have been which never could have been. Well, forgive me for interrupting you—"

"You have not interrupted me; the story is all over. It was not very long to tell."

"Oh no; let me finish it. You saw me; and I was poor and obscure; and you found no difficulty in taking the chance word of a good-natured, thoughtless girl as decisive of my fate; and you hurried back, and married your friend and patron, who had influence and power. You were grateful to him—quite right; and he exacted his recompense for what he had done, and you gave him yourself as his reward. Well, I offer you my congratulations, and to him too. I am late in the expression of my good wishes, but you must remember how well you kept the secret of your happiness, and that I thought you were a widow, not a wife."

I saw Christina's cheek flush, and her eyes first sparkle and then fill with tears; but I was not in a mood to be stayed. Every thing seemed to have conspired to make me savage, and some infernal spirit within appeared to drive me on, adding word to word.

"Emanuel!"

"Yes; I thought you were a widow. So, I suppose, did your other friend and patron, Mr. Lyndon. *He* surely is not in your secrets? Or is he supposed to be your husband's friend, appointed to console you, and give you courage in his absence and his dangers?"

"I have at least had no reason, as yet, to repent of any confidence I may have placed in him, as I have now to repent of the confidence I placed in you. Emanuel, I know you will be ashamed of your bitterness and your cruelty, and I forgive you beforehand. I know you have reason to complain. I owe you something, too; let me pay a part of my obligation by bearing patiently any insult you may choose to offer. You do not know how cruel you are. I have striven to be a devoted and loyal wife to my husband, as a brave German woman ought to be; and I have suffered much; and if I have had my ambition, it has not been fed for nothing, or bought without heavy penalty; and of the old days nothing remains; and now you insult and scorn me. It is much; but I bear it for the sake of old memories."

She had been seated on a sofa. She now stood up and leaned against the chimney-piece, and tossed her bright mass of hair back over her shoulders with the old familiar impatient action of one whom the weight of it oppressed in a moment of excitement. She looked so like the Christina of old that my anger melted away, and I bitterly repented my hasty words.

"I am always asking you to forgive me, Christina; I must ask you now again, sincerely and humbly, for pardon. I was very bitter, and rude, and brutal, and I knew how unjust I was even at the time. But I only ask you to make some allowance for me. You know how I loved you. Oh, I am speaking now only of the past, and I might say it if your husband stood there! I loved you deeply. No woman can be loved so twice in a life."

"I know it, Emanuel, and I do forgive you, freely and fully, your harsh words. You too must make allowance for me. My life is an anxious one in many ways. So far it has been a failure; and yet the best has passed. When I look at you, Emanuel, and make you my own mirror, I see that I too am no longer young. What a handsome, fair-haired boy you were when I first saw you! How many years ago?"

"Twelve years ago."

"How old are you now? You may tell me; I shall not betray confidence."

"I don't know—thirty-two or three."

"*Ach Gott!*—so old! And I am—but that does not concern you to know. Yes, youth is gone for both of us. I am talking wildly to-day, am I not? Yes, I can't help it; but I don't often get into these moods. Youth is gone."

She turned to the mirror over the chimney-piece, and still keeping back her hair, gazed intently into her own face. Truth to speak, with all its lustrous beauty, there were faint, faint marks under the eyes, which hinted mournfully of Time's premature footprints.

"I was handsome, Emanuel, when a girl—was I not?"

She spoke without turning to me.

"You were beautiful; but surely you must know that you are still"—I was going to say, "that you are still beautiful;" but the expression of her face was so entirely abstracted and *distraite* that the compliment, if it could be called one, died upon my lips.

"Yes," she went on, almost as one who talks in a dream, "I was very handsome, and very, very ambitious. I thought I was born for something great—born, perhaps, to conquer the world. You could not know how ambitious I was, and how my heart was set on success; and nothing has come of it, after all."

"Nothing! and you the most successful of the day?"

"Yes, the most successful of the day; but who will be the most successful of to-morrow? I shall sing, perhaps, another season or two, and then be forgotten. I know well enough that I am not like Giulia Grisi. *There* is a singer to be remembered. I shall be extinguished when I cease to sing. My success will die with the echo of my voice. I have

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"HOW MANY YEARS AGO?"

often thought that I am like the man in my much-loved Schiller's play, who says he staked his happiness and his heaven on being a hero, and in the end no hero was there, only a failure."

She leaned now on the chimney-piece, and still contemplated her own face. I dare say an ordinary looker-on would have thought there was something theatric and self-conscious in her attitudes and her ways. I did not think

there was. From her childhood almost—she was little more than a child when first I knew her—there was that rare and striking harmony of mind and body in her which made every word find unconsciously its natural expression in some gesture or attitude. This was not surely, one would have thought, a German attribute. Still less was it a faculty any one can get up, or even cultivate. It came by nature. It made her a successful actress; it made her seem natural on the stage, because every action expressed so easily and gracefully the emotion which suggested it; it made her seem theatric off the stage, because so few people either will or can allow their moods to find any outward expression beyond that of voice and complexion.

She suddenly turned to me, and going back to the earlier part of our conversation, she said:

"You think I kept all this purposely a secret from you?"

I knew, of course, she meant her marriage and its story.

"I did think so, Christina."

"Well, perhaps it was partly a secret—at least, until I could learn what sort of person time and change had made *you*. Perhaps you did not at first show yourself in a manner which greatly invited confidence. Perhaps I fancied that you already knew nearly all the truth. Perhaps I may have thought—" and she stopped and sighed, and then smiled a strange, nervous, painful smile I did not like to see. Then she made a quick gesture with both hands as if she flung the subject from her, and came back to her seat. Looking at her watch, she said:

"My husband will be here soon. You know now why I was so much confused and embarrassed the last day you were here?"

"Yes; that was his signal I heard?"

"It was. He always whistles those few bars—first once, then again with the slight variation; and I know he is coming. That is, you understand, when I have not seen him for some time—when his coming is unexpected; and it may be necessary to make some preparation to get rid of inconvenient visitors—"

"Like me?"

"Like you that last day, before he knew you or had given me leave to trust you. Oh, I am thoroughly disciplined and obedient to him, believe me. I have heard that whistle in many places—in places where I knew that a mistake or a delay, or a precipitate motion on my part, might involve his discovery and his death. I did not expect to hear it so soon, although I knew that the plan for his escape out of the Lombard prison was in good hands and progressing well. I have not a genius for conspiracy, Emanuel, and they don't trust me much with details; even *he* does not. I wait and watch and keep the secrets, and do faithfully as I am told. And I have denationalized myself for his sake, and forgotten my country; indeed, had I not forgotten it long ago? and I have learned to hope that the German soldiers may one day be chased across the Alps. My husband is a man to inspire any one with his own hopes and his own will, as you are sure to discover before long."

A card was put into Christina's hand, and she directed that the visitor should be shown up.

"It is *he*," she whispered to me when the servant had left the room. "*Here*, just now, he is only on my ordinary visiting-list. He is to me an Italian patriot who honors me with his acquaintance—no more."

In a moment Signor Salaris entered.

I do not know whether he had expected to find her alone, but in the mere flash of time from his announcement to his reaching Christina, I saw three distinct changes of expression in his face. His wife stood at the side of the chimney-piece, nearly opposite the door; I had fallen back to one of the windows looking into Jermyn Street. As he came in I could see him, but he, naturally looking directly before him, did not see me. He crossed the threshold, therefore, with the formal bow of an ordinary visitor, and the corresponding expression. Apparently then, as he only saw his wife, he assumed that she was alone, and his pale face lighted up with a warm and bright expression, and he seemed for the instant, the second, like one rejoicing to throw off a weary disguise. And then he saw me; and with a change quick as the motion of light itself, his countenance subsided into the genial, courteous expression of one who presents himself to a friend. Probably no unprepared eye could have noted these changes. I saw them clearly, and they were significant of a character and a life.

Christina reassured him with a smile and a few words.

"My dear Carlo, here we are all friends, and you are my husband, not my visitor."

"Then this gentleman," he said, turning to me and speaking in excellent English, though a little slow and with a deep Italian accent, "this is Mr. Temple? I might have known him, indeed.—I have seen and heard you more than once, Mr. Temple, but I did not at first recognize you. I offer you my hand; I am, if you will allow me, your friend."

I gave him my hand, and we exchanged a cordial grasp. I think both our faces flushed. I felt mine grow hot. I know that across his pale cheek something faintly approaching to a crimson tinge came flashing, and a strange sudden spasm passed over it. Can we be friends? Here is the man who has robbed me of Christina; can I be his friend, sincerely, truly?

I think so; at least I will try. I like the expression of his face; I like his soft dark liquid eyes, with an expression at once wild and gentle and beseeching in them, like the eyes of a gazelle; I like the contrast they present to the rigid, deep-thinking, inflexible expression of the brow and the lips and the chin. I feel sure this man has an unconquerable will, and a pure tender heart. He is artist and conspirator

in one. He ought to have lived centuries ago, and been a minstrel and a patriot at once. Or he ought to have lived half a century back or thereabouts, and been a Girondist and led the chorus of the Marseillaise on the day when he and his brothers went out to die.

Yes, I liked the man at once; and as I looked from his face to Christina's and noted her expression, I liked him all the better, for I felt an indescribable pang of sympathy and pity for him. His liquid loving eye looked melancholy when it turned on her, and hers sank beneath his glance.

We talked like friends. He told me of his escape from prison in a pleasant simple kind of way, very agreeable, and even fascinating, to hear. There was a quiet modesty about all he said relating to himself that won upon one immensely. We talked of music and art, on which he was almost eloquent. When for a moment the conversation lapsed into what may be called generalities and conventional talk, he subsided into silence, and his mind evidently withdrew itself altogether into its own habitual thoughts.

I noted that Christina's eye always quietly followed his expressions of feature; I noted that the moment he lapsed into silence she changed the conversation, appealed directly to him with some question or other, and drew him forward again. I think I read their story.

"She has given herself to him," I thought, "and she esteems him, and fears *for* him; and she would love him if she could. But she can not, and she knows it; and neither is happy. I read in his face high aim, and courage, and absolute self-devotion, and brooding perseverance —and failure. Whatever his hopes, they are doomed to fail."

Heavy and blank was the first feeling of disappointment with which I left Christina's house that day, knowing as a certainty and for the first time that she had a living, loving husband. But was I only disappointed—was the disappointment utter and without shade? Was there not some vague perception of a sense of relief? Month after month, year after year, I had worn myself out with almost unendurable agony of longing and disappointment, hopes and sickening pangs of despair; and now at last the doubt and the conflict of feeling were over, and I was released from the struggle. Now the torment of hope was quelled; now the worst was known; now the bitterness of death was past. Many a man perhaps, says the jailer in Scott's romance, the night before he is executed, but no man the night before he is tried.

Yes, I felt a sense of relief. I should torture myself with doubt and hope no more. I should walk up and down my room of nights trying to squeeze hope out of every word she had uttered, every glance I had caught—as shipwrecked sailors becalmed on a burning southern sea strive to squeeze moisture out of rags—no more. I should rehearse what I could say when next we met, or lament that I had not said this and that when last we met—no more. I should now be able to drudge through my life unvexed because hopeless. A resolve, too, came up at once with a great new pang of relief. I had become a singer and taken to the lyric stage to please her, to win her, to prove to her that I could succeed; now I would give it up. I would cease to sham an artist's part, for which I really had no true taste or soul. I would go to some other country, to America, and see my brother. How fraternal we all grow, how we think of far-off brothers and sisters and mothers, when some woman has thrown us over! We are all like the gamester in the famous classic comedy of France, who only remembers her to whom he owes his duty when the luck of the night has gone against him. I might have lived long enough content with very rare and passing scraps of news from my brother, but now a sudden and surprising tenderness had sprang up in my heart, and I wondered how I had existed so long without seeing him; and I quite resolved to go out to the States, and perhaps, with such money as I could get together, join him in some new Western settlement, and be a farmer. I thought of my own stout and sinewy arms and rather athletic frame, and came to the conclusion that, after all, digging, or felling trees, or hunting, was the sort of thing for which Nature had clearly intended me.

In a word, I was used up, and wanted a new and freshening life. I envied my Italian friend his schemes and his aspirations, and thought I should dearly like to have an oppressed nationality to plot for, and if needs were, die for; and I really wished I could, even through his influence, get up within myself a sort of bastard philo-Italianism, and fling myself into the cause of Italy as so many Englishmen were beginning to do even then, and as Byron and Stanhope, and Hastings and Finlay, and so many others, had done for Greece. But I was never much of a politician; and I was so sick of the stage that I recoiled from the notion of converting my individual life into a new piece of acting. I had long come to think, and I do still think it seriously and profoundly, that nothing in life—no, nothing whatever—is so enviable as the capacity to merge one's individuality and very existence wholly in some great cause, and to heed no personal sacrifice which is offered in its name. I don't much care whether the cause be political, or artistic, or scientific, or what not; let there but be a cause to which the individual is subjected, in which he freely loses himself, and I hold that man happy, if man can ever be happy at all. Never had it been my fortunate fate to have found such an object. My own profession never gave it to me. Therefore I accounted existence so far a failure. I had tried many modes of activity and amusement, and distraction and enjoyment, and they had done nothing for me, because I had never gone deeply enough into any path of life, or thought, or work; I had never

had a cause to live for, and I might as well not have lived at all. If I have any faith left in me, it is that faith in a cause, as the soul, the grace, the beauty, the purpose of life.

I will seek then, I said to myself, a new activity. I will steep life in freshness, and recolor it in the dyes of new sensations. *Ich will mein Glück probiren—marschiren!*

CHAPTER XXI.

EXILE AND OUTCAST.

YES; I began to think seriously of going to the United States, making my way out Westward, buying land, and turning farmer. Vague and delightful visions of the forest scenery of the New World filled me; visions of woods where tints, which in our European region we know of only in manufactured colors, mingle and contrast in the living glory of the autumnal foliage. Dreams of the rolling prairie, and the deep wine-colored brooklet, and the rushing river, were in my mind and before my senses. It seemed to me that nothing but the fresh bosom of the young mother-Nature of the West could revive my exhausted and flagging temperament. I was fast growing more and more weary of life as I found it, and as I made it. Heat and crowd, and midnight suppers, or lonely midnight grumblings and reflections, perpetual excitement, fatigue, overwork, too much wine, and the almost incessant cigar—these began to take effect just as I might reasonably have expected. I found that my voice already was beginning to show signs of suffering. Nobody else noticed it yet; but I could not be deceived. I consulted a medical man, who recommended rest and country air; and I thought of acting on his advice soon—some time, perhaps, when the season was over, or next year, or whenever convenient.

Meanwhile I went on as before; I mixed a great deal with joyous company of all kinds. A positive necessity for distraction of some sort seemed to have seized hold of me, and it even appeared as if distraction relieved my mind and improved my physical condition. The resolve to give up the stage and go to America supplied a delightful excuse and temptation. It would be clearly a waste of power, an unnecessary vexation, to put myself under heavy restraint just now, when so short a time was to bring about a total change of life and habits. The fresh manly life of the New World would soon restore me to that physical strength and brightness of temperament which I used to enjoy. No use, then, in beginning any reform before I undertake the enterprise which shall change scene and habits and life altogether.

I sometimes even thought of the expediency of marrying and ranging myself, taking a companion with me to America to be a backwoodsman's wife. But I always ended by dismissing the idea as one that brought up a sensation of repulsiveness with it. To begin with, I knew nobody whom I would or could marry. Most of the women I knew were singers or actresses; and I saw most of them too closely to be likely to fall in love with any, even if a deeper and earlier feeling did not absorb my heart. There was one to whom at times I did feel myself slightly attracted; she was the little Frenchwoman with whom I had had a sort of flirtation on the evening when I otherwise made a fool of myself at Christina's apartments. She did not discourage my attentions whenever they were offered, and I did sometimes pay court to her. She was young and very pretty. She was not witty or intellectual, or gifted with any conversational power beyond what mere animal vivacity or flow of talk may give. I do not know why on earth I cared for her company, except that she was easy of access and full of life, and her society served to distract me, just as smoking or drinking might.

My new friend, who called herself Mlle. Finola, and was the daughter, I came to know, of a fat couple who sold slippers in one of the passages of the Palais Royal, was a girl with a very agreeable light French sort of soprano voice, and pleasing vivacious ways, and an inordinate amount of self-conceit. She was not by any means a bad little person, and would rather, all things being equal, do a kindly thing than not. She was, I have no doubt, practically, or as Heine would say, anatomically, virtuous; but she had no particular prejudice in favor of virtue, and probably never troubled herself much by thinking on the subject. Her ideas of life consisted of flattery, singing, lyrical successes, complimentary critiques in newspapers, jewels, crinoline (crinoline was rather a new fashion then), pleasant little dinners and suppers, carriages, and a fair prospect of a brilliant match. She had no more true lyrical genius than an Italian boy's monkey; but she sometimes captivated audiences, and set them applauding with a genuine enthusiasm which Pasta might have failed to arouse. She had a quick arch way of glinting with her eyes, which conveyed to some people an idea of immense latent humor and *espièglerie*, that, I can answer for it, had no existence in my little friend's mental constitution. She turned her bright beaming orbs in flashing rapidity from stalls to boxes in a manner which irresistibly kept attention alive. Who could withdraw his interest for a moment from the stage when he could not tell but that the very next moment those glittering laughing brown eyes might roguishly seek out his own? She had apparently the faculty of eye-flirting with every man in a whole theatre in turn. Then she shrugged her very full, white, and bare shoulders with such a piquancy, and had such quick graceful gestures, and so fluttered her pretty plumage, that it was quite a pleasant sight to see. Of course all this told with much more decided effect in the Italiens, or some such house, than in one of our great temples of opera; but even

in our vast house it had its effect upon the limited section from whom the rest of the audience, and the town generally, took their time.

Not, however, to be merely *piquante* and vivacious, Mlle. Finola had a way of throwing a momentary gleam of tender softness into her eyes, and looking pensively before her, as if consciousness had withdrawn itself wholly from the audience, and buried itself in the depths of some sweet inner sadness; and she so thrilled out a prolonged, plaintive, and dreamy note, that people sometimes declared her pathetic power quite equal to her humor and vivacity. When ordinary observers note any little effect produced with ease they are apt to believe that the performer has a capacity for doing something infinitely greater, if he or she would only try, and did but care to succeed. A sad mistake generally; for on the stage and in real life we almost invariably do all we can and the best we can; and that which you see is the display of our whole stock of capability. But audiences could not readily believe that the one little bit of effective show had exhausted Mlle. Finola's whole resources. The result was that in her own parts, Rosinas, Figlias del Reggimento, and so on, she was greatly admired, and her little tricks of instinctive coquetry and vivacity were accepted by many as the deliberate and triumphant efforts of graceful art, if not indeed the stray sparks which indicated the existence of a latent fire of true lyrical genius.

Now this little personage was beginning to be very popular about the time when Christina's husband came to London. She had not, indeed, come as yet into any sort of antagonism or rivalry with Madame Reichstein, and they never sang together; but Finola's nights were usually very successful, and she was even rallying a sort of party round her both in audiences and critics. Perhaps Christina's passionate, enthusiastic style had begun to be too much for some of her hearers. True art is a sad strain upon the intellects of many of us; and little Finola was a great relief. She was Offenbach after Meyerbeer; and a good many occupants of opera-stalls to-day know what that means, and can appreciate the charming relaxation to wearied inanity which it implies. And though not as yet any thing of a rival to Christina, Finola was beginning to be talked about a good deal. I don't think Christina at this time cared in the least, or grudged the little thing any sprays of laurel that might fall to her. But she always affected to think me an admirer of Finola, one of Finola's party, and indeed, more than that, one of Finola's lovers; and at last, out of pure spleen at being so set down, I acted intentionally as if I were one of that silly throng; and as Mlle. Finola liked flirting with any one, she showed herself willing enough to flirt with me.

I have spoken of all this for the purpose of showing how matters stood as regarded Christina and myself just about the time when her husband made his appearance so unexpectedly in London. We—Christina and I—were on strange, cold, almost unfriendly terms, so far as all outer appearances went. My soul was still filled with love for her, wildly dashed sometimes with a bitterness not much unlike hate. She, on her side, seemed to me to be leading the life almost of a frivolous, careless, heartless coquette; I was drifting away from all my old moorings of steadfastness and perseverance and patience, and becoming an idler with the idle; I drank midnight, and thought midnight, as the phrase has it. With the sudden appearance of the Italian exile came a change in all our relationships; chance, utter chance, conspired with his own character and purpose, and the place he held in Christina's life, to make his presence the source of change and event to all of us.

In a very short time after his coming, Signor Salaris became the recognized lion of the London season. He had, in the *impresario's* sense of the word, quite a wonderful success. He delivered lectures on his imprisonment and his escape, which crowded Willis's Rooms, and filled King Street with coroneted carriages. He pleaded the cause of his country; he called upon England to regard the independence of Italy as Europe's most pressing and vital question; and countesses clapped their kid-gloved hands and waved their perfumed handkerchiefs. He dined now with a Cabinet minister, and now with the leader of the Opposition. He spent great part of his time at Mr. Lyndon's. He was intrigued for and battled for as the attraction of evening parties. He bore it all patiently, as one who does a work of drudgery with a good object; but he smiled sadly and shook his head when one congratulated him privately on his success. I once told him he ought to be a proud man. He said he felt profoundly discouraged. A great illusion, he calmly said, was gone. England, he now knew, would do nothing for his country. He had come to plead for protection and help. He found himself the hero of a carnival scene, pelted with flowers and sugar-plums.

I am not a politician, and this is not a political story. I introduce the subject of Salaris and his success, because at this time in one way, as later in another, it affected my own life.

I went one evening to hear my new friend tell his story and make his appeal in Willis's Rooms. I went alone; the room was crowded; Mr. Lyndon, M.P., presided. There were present what Ned Lambert would have called "no end of swells." Salaris was speaking when I got in. He was really not, in the rhetorical sense, an eloquent man. He had nothing of Kossuth about him, nor had his style any thing of the poetic grandiloquence of Mazzini. He talked in a simple, severe, unpretending sort of way, with hardly any gesticulation. The sincerity of his purpose, the clear straightforwardness of his language, the sweetness of his ex-

pression, made the great charm which, added, of course, to the romantic nature of his recent escape, delighted the West End. He was a novelty in the way of exiles. He positively seemed, I heard a lady near me remark, quite like an English gentleman. In fact, the Thaddeus of Warsaw personage was played out; and the West End now thrilled with a new sensation, to see an escaped and exiled patriot who looked like an ordinary gentleman, and spoke as composedly as a financial member of Parliament.

I looked round the room, expecting to see Christina there. I was not disappointed. She was seated two or three rows of seats away from me, and she looked very handsome, but melancholy, and a little fatigued. She was apparently not listening much more attentively than I was. She saw me, and nodded a salutation, and whispered something to a lady at her side. The lady, who seemed to have been listening very closely to the speaker, looked up, and glanced toward me. She was very young—about nineteen, perhaps—with a delicate, clearly-shaped, youthful Madonna face, and eyes that had a tender violet light in them. They were eyes that did not flash or glitter or sparkle. They rested on you with a quiet luminous depth, like the light a planet seems to give. Her face had a thoughtful, sweet, almost sad expression until the violet light arising in the eyes suffused the whole countenance with its genial radiancy. It was a face not to be forgotten, once you had seen it; and I had not forgotten it, for I had seen it before, and had many a time wished to see it again. It was the face of Mr. Lyndon's youngest daughter; the girl to whom I had spoken in Palace Yard when wild Stephen Lyndon made his absurd mistake.

Did you ever on an evening of reckless revelry, amidst an atmosphere steaming with heat and lights and the fumes of wine, in a room ringing with laughter and frivolity, suddenly open a window, and looking out catch a glimpse of the blue summer heaven and the pure light of the stars? If so, you will understand how I felt when I looked up from the increasing degeneracy of my life, with its foolish excitements and its barren spasmodic passion, and saw the face of Lilla Lyndon.

I glanced many times to where she sat, and I forgot the cause of Italy's independence. Once, only once, she looked toward me.

There was a slight movement on the platform; a letter was handed to Mr. Lyndon. That gentleman said a word to the lecturer, who at once stopped, bowed, and drew back; and Mr. Lyndon rising came to the front and apologized for having to leave the chair. He was obliged to go down to the House immediately. His distinguished friend, the Dean of some place or other, whose remarkable work recently published had proved how well he understood the Italian question and how thoroughly he sympathized with the cause of Italy, had kindly consented to take the chair. There was a murmur of genteel applause for Mr. Lyndon, another for the Dean, as the latter gracefully threw himself into the vacated chair; and then Mr. Lyndon disappeared from the platform, the lecture went on, and the audience settled itself to listen as before.

Once, and only once, did Salaris make any attempt at eloquence; and even that was but the eloquence of passionate conviction. It was at the close, where he proclaimed, rather than merely predicted, to his hearers that, let who would be friend or foe, the day of Italy's independence was sure and near. "Only yesterday," he said, "an English lady—I see her now in this room—gave me as an omen of good a translation of a noble poem by a great living poet, a German, which bids my country be of good cheer and expect her deliverance. Will you listen to a few lines? The German poet reminds my country of the story of Penelope: how she was fair, and persecuted for her beauty, and how the reckless strangers reveled in her hall:

'Twenty years the purple tissue span she weeping on her throne;
Twenty years in bitter sorrow nurtured her beloved son;
Twenty years remained she faithful to her husband and her name—
Weeping, hoping, sending seekers—lo, and her Ulysses came!

'Woe to the audacious wooers when they heard the avenger's tread,
And the bitter death-charged arrows from his clanging bow were sped;
With the red blood of the strangers hall and pavement dripping lay,
And a fearful feast of vengeance then was held at Ithaca.

'Knowest thou that song, Italia? Listen, and in patience wait,
Even although the swarm of strangers throng through thy ancestral gate;
Rear thy sons to fearless manhood, though with many a burning tear;
Wait and hope; thy hour is coming: thy Ulysses too is near.'"

To the closing lines he gave all the dignity, the thrilling force, the strength of pathos and of hope, which the words deserved, and which his penetrating voice, his noble earnestness, his expression, now animated, could lend. "It is," he added, slowly, "the poetry, the hope, the encouragement of a German! *Quod minime reris!* The sympathy and the hope are the more welcome, the more delightful. I accept the omen for my country, and I say to her:

'Wait and hope; thy hour is coming; thy Ulysses too is near.'"

He remained for a moment motionless and silent, and the audience did not know whether he had finished or not; then his hand dropped upon the desk near him, and he bowed to the assemblage, and drew back from the front of the platform.

There was quite a cordial and enthusiastic demonstration of applause; and then began the rustling of silks, and calling of carriages, and

the babble of talk with acquaintances, and the crowding on the stairs.

The moment the movement of departure began Madame Reichstein invited me by a look to come to her. She and Miss Lyndon had withdrawn into a corner a little out of the stream of the departing crowd. I made my way through groups of people and over trailing skirts to where they stood.

"How did you like it?" were Christina's first words; and then, without waiting for an answer, she said, "I wish to introduce you to Miss Lyndon—Miss Lilla Lyndon."

Before the ceremony of introduction was well through two or three acquaintances closed round Madame Reichstein, and Miss Lyndon and I were left for the moment together.

"Am I wrong, Mr. Temple," she said, "in thinking that we have met and spoken together before?"

"No, Miss Lyndon, you are quite right."

"That day in Palace Yard, when that poor man came up and stopped the carriage and called me by my name?"

"That was the day. You have a good memory."

"It made a painful impression on me, that scene and that poor man. I thought I could not have been mistaken, Mr. Temple, in you, when I saw you a few nights ago for the first time since that day. May I congratulate you now on your success—on the name you have won since I first saw you? It always gave me pleasure to believe that it was you with whom I had spoken that day, for you were kind to that strange poor creature."

This was a subject that somewhat embarrassed me; I turned to something else.

"The lines that Signor Salaris recited were translated by you, Miss Lyndon, I venture to think?"

"They were. Did you like them?"

"I thought them noble in spirit, and I hope prophetic; and they sounded to me—I have not seen the original—like a pure and exquisite translation."

"I am very glad; they are Geibel's. They seemed to me prophetic, and so I showed them to Signor Salaris. He is a noble creature, and I hope whatever he engages in may succeed; but I don't understand much of Italian affairs."

"Nor I, indeed, Miss Lyndon."

"Not you? And yet you ought to be at least a sort of step-son of Italy."

"I only know my step-mother's voice. Her interests she keeps for her own children."

"We are going, Emanuel," said Christina, who was leaning on the arm of some gentleman.

I offered Miss Lyndon my arm, and she leaned on it: I felt the pressure of her light touch, and I was thrilled by it.

"Do you know, Mr. Temple," she said, as we descended the stairs, "I have never ceased to think that there was some mystery about that man in Palace Yard which I ought to know, and that *you* could explain it. How did he come to know my name, and why did his face seem so strange, and yet so familiar to me? Will you tell me?"

"Pray, Miss Lyndon, don't ask me; I can not tell you any thing about him—at least not now; not without thinking over it. The secret, if it be one, may not be mine to tell."

"Then there is something?"

"There is."

"And he had some reason for knowing me and calling me by my name?"

"Pray don't ask any more. He had."

"I knew it," she said; and an unconscious vibration passed from her arm to mine.

"Some time, Miss Lyndon, you may know all; and it may be in your power to do good by the knowledge to people who are unhappy, and who don't deserve to be so."

She looked into my face, with surprise and deep interest in her clear pensive eyes.

Christina was already at the door of her little brougham waiting for us. I handed Miss Lyndon in. Christina gave me her hand without a word, and I saw a strange expression in her face, as if something had both perplexed and irritated her. I could not understand it.

Miss Lyndon held out her delicate little hand with a frank and friendly expression. I touched it, and the light pressure lingered long with me. As I left the place I felt like one on whom the first breath of some purifying and sacred influence has fallen. The presence of this girl had strangely affected me when first I saw her, and I had never forgotten the sensation. Now it filled me almost wholly. It was indescribable; at least, I can not describe it any better than by saying that while the presence of Christina seemed to allure me with the rich incense of flowers, that of Lilla Lyndon made me thoughtful and full of pure regret and humility, like the light of the stars.

In most stories of ghosts and demons and warlocks is it not sufficient to speak of the odious and supernatural creature in order to evoke his presence? Apparently some spell of the same kind haunted me this night. Miss Lyndon and I had spoken of the man who accosted her in Palace Yard; I had never seen him since my return from Italy. I had hardly got a dozen paces from the door of Willis's Rooms when I came straight on him.

Keeping the same side as you walk from Willis's Rooms toward St. James's Square, you may see as you look across the street a row of white and stuccoed houses on the other side, one of which has a fame attached to it. When I nearly fell over Stephen Lyndon he was standing on the edge of the foot-path, looking up at that particular house. He did not seem a day older than when I saw him last. He wore the black wig as before, and was rather better dressed than I had seen him on some former occasions, though not up to the mark of one memorable occasion when he came out resplendent. It seemed to me, too, that there was a

little more of quietness and caution about him than was his wont in earlier times.

I did not know then that he was there waiting for me. So I felt vexed when I nearly ran up against him, and recognized him in the clear moonlight of a beautiful night, and saw that he had recognized me, and there was no escape without at least a parley.

"Good-evening, Temple," he said, in the coolest and easiest kind of way, as if we had met only the night before last; and he quietly laid his hand on my arm and stayed my going farther. "I have been contemplating that house over there; the first of the row. I have been meditating, Temple. An exile lived there once, my child of song—an illustrious exile. Where is he now, Temple? Only on a throne, my swan. There are exiles and exiles, Temple. Our patriotic and banished friend Salaris will hardly, I think, come to so brilliant a place. The throne for one conspirator, and the prison, or very likely the block, for another. Crowns for the crowns that have brains under them; blocks for the blockheads. He is a gifted and touching blockhead, that friend of ours, Mr. Temple. I like him; but I was always a child of sentiment. I saw *you* in Willis's Rooms."

"Were you there?"

"I was there; oh yes. He and I, you know, are old friends. I saw Goodboy on the platform, and he saw me. I think he winced a little, but it was a lost fear. I have given up my notion of doing any thing with him in the way of street-scenes."

"I am very glad to hear it. I do hope you have turned decent and honorable and manly. Mr. Lyndon, there are many reasons why I wish you well."

"Thanks; I dare say. I really believe you, Temple; and I think you are a good sort of a fellow in your way. Yes, I am quite a reformed man. In fact, Temple, he was too much for me in that way."

"What way?"

"You never heard, then?"

"I have not heard any thing about you for a long time."

"True; you were away in Italian myrtle-bowers, and that sort of delightful thing. Well, I opened fire regularly on Goodboy; waylaid him at his door; pursued him to the House, to the Club, to the Opera. What do you think he did? He coolly took the bull by the horns. He gave me in charge to a policeman; he followed up the charge at the police-court; he delivered his version of the business with a dignified mock humility which quite touched and charmed 'the worthy magistrate.' He recounted all the things he had done for me, and all our venerable father had done; and it was a magnificent scene, quite. And do you know, Temple, while the whole thing was a hideous lie from beginning to end, there was not a word in it which was not literally true? It put me in an unpleasant light; that I must frankly confess. Well, there was nothing for me but to find bail—which of course I couldn't do—or be sent to prison, or pledge my honor to molest him no more—in that way. Temple, I was defeated. I had fought Respectability, and was overthrown! At least, I had the sense to know that I was beaten, and I surrendered and promised."

"I am very glad to hear it."

"Are you? So I dare say is Goodboy. But wait for the end. Do you ever read the Greek dramatists, Temple? I suppose not. Well, there is some good advice given by one of them about counting no man successful until you have seen the game all out. You just wait. If I detested Goodboy before, do you think I like him any better now? Do you know, the cunning old boy managed so well, that not a line of the business got into the papers; so that I had not even the satisfaction of bringing open scandal on him. I wrote letter after letter to the papers; need I say that no editor did me the favor of putting the tale of the wrongs I had suffered into print? Well, there's enough of that. I have had rather a hard life of it since. Give you my word, I don't think any thing could have kept me up but my deep religious feeling and my determination to be revenged upon my enemies. I thought it well to retire from the metropolis for a little. I broke loose from my base, and marched right into the heart of the country—Liverpool, Manchester, and that sort of place. Coarse, cloddish, without soul, without humor, and, let me tell you, by no means green or awkward with the cards and the billiards. Ah, *mon Dieu!* it was hard and dull. No matter, I live! Providentially preserved, I still live! I return to town at last, led doubtless by my star. I find two of my old acquaintances established as lions of the season. You are one; my Carbonaro of Willis's Rooms is the other. Good Heaven, it ought to teach the vainest of us a lesson in modesty, when such people can be successful."

We were now walking round St. James's Square. We might have been mistaken for two dear and intimate friends. Lyndon was leaning affectionately on my arm, even when he was propounding lessons of humility drawn from the incomprehensible fact that such a personage as I had succeeded.

I thought of him then as I had thought of him always since our first meeting—as a hopeless old reprobate, whose inner nature no power on earth could touch, and whose utterly selfish and heartless levity could only be explained or excused by the theory that something not unlike insanity was mingled with his blood. Yet I now walked with him, listened to him, allowed him to lean on me, felt even a positive interest in his welfare.

Why? Was it for the sake of Ned Lambert and his love, and my sincere friendship for them both?

In sad sober truth, it was not.

It was because the thoughtful violet eyes of Lilla Lyndon the younger had looked into mine

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with kindly interest while she spoke of this man. The thought of her transfigured him in my mind. Nay, this miserable wretch was a sort of link between us. His very misery might be the cause of our meeting again.

And at this time I had no more thought of loving Lilla Lyndon than I had of falling in love with a saint or a star. I still believed that my life was to be forever shadowed and frustrated by hopeless unfading passion for Christina Reichstein.

I listened, then, to Lyndon's talk, and even encouraged him, and assured him I would save him if I could.

"Now that," he said, "is the very thing I am coming at. I really do think, Temple, that you are a sincere sort of person; and that you mean what you say. My daughter has disappeared somewhere; I can not find out where; and I don't suppose, you know, that it much matters, because I dare say the girl is hard up, and drudging and toiling, and that sort of thing, and of course she couldn't do any thing for me. I should think Goodboy turned her adrift; he's quite mean enough for it. Well, you see, it's no use my looking her up. Do you know, I am so sensitive, and epicurean, and chivalrous in all my ways, that I can't bear to see women who are drudging and poor and overworked. It isn't the poetic idea of womanhood, is it? Women don't look as if they ought to be seen then. They get pale and washed-out-looking, and the plump outlines go, and their hands look dirty and needle-marked, and all the rest of it. No; I really prefer, as a father, not to see my daughter just now. You follow me, Temple?"

"I do," was my grim reply. Even the color of those violet eyes was fading from my mind as he talked in this way.

"You appreciate what I mean?"

"Quite," I replied, more grimly.

"Now, on the other hand, look at my niece. Aha, have I touched you?" I suppose I started. "There is a lovely girl, charming to look at; a little pale, you will say; but so very interesting, and with such an expression of goodness. Now, Temple, don't you think *she* could be brought to do something for me? Don't you think, at least, she ought to be allowed to know of my existence? I know it's kept a secret from her. I know she is ignorant of the tender tie that binds her to me. Now, Temple, my boy, here is your opportunity! You know her; you are in your own way a kind of success, and I dare say would pass off easily upon her—she's evidently very green and innocent—as quite a distinguished and delightful sort of person. I saw you handing her to the carriage to-day; you did the thing quite in good style; I dare say she wouldn't notice any difference. Now, *your* motive can not be suspected. Mine, I confess, is open to misinterpretation! Temple, do a benevolent deed. Here is an outcast uncle panting for love and redemption, and very, very hard up. There is a lovely niece, with her little bosom overflowing with family affection and benevolence and romantic nonsense of all kinds, and with unlimited influence over papa's purse. Temple, need I say more? You have a heart, and quite a presentable appearance. Bring us together, and look for your reward Above."

I managed to escape at last, without making a promise of any kind; but he squeezed my hand warmly, accepted a trifling loan, and went away humming a hopeful tune.

CHAPTER XXII.

RIVALRY.

Our season was drawing fast to a close—the first season during which Christina and I had sung together—the season of fruition! I had some Continental engagements during the winter; she intended to take absolute rest, for she had been apparently in uncertain and even delicate health for some time back, and her voice had occasionally failed her. Just at the close of the season she brought on herself, by want of caution, rather a severe attack of chest or throat complaint, as shall be presently told.

Her husband had left London, disappointed but not dispirited. He was in Paris, striving to teach diplomatists and statesmen there the necessity of doing just what was afterward done; that is to say, boldly and in the field taking up the cause of Italy against Austria. As yet his efforts did not promise much success, and of England he had no longer any hope.

On the very day after the Willis's-Rooms lecture at which I was present, Christina was attacked by a sort of nervous weakness and cold, and her place was vacant for a week. Mlle. Finola made her hay while the sun shone, and came out prominently. Crowded houses and animated audiences greeted her, and she began to walk the stage with an air of conquering rivalry in the very rustle of her petticoats. Critiques were written, proclaiming her the mistress of a new style, the leader of a new lyrical school. She took all the praises with a quiet *nonchalance*, as if they were nothing but the homage properly due to genius. To crown the whole, she undertook some of Christina's own favorite parts, and produced a curious half-pathetic, half-comic *mélange*, which it was not possible to think uninteresting, kept people's eyes and ears quite open, puzzled many intelligent and appreciative listeners, and was hailed with positive enthusiasm by the general public.

I had to sing with Mlle. Finola in most of her parts; and at first I put on a kind of high-art indifference toward the whole affair. Indeed, I did not care to sing with any woman but Christina, and I looked upon little Finola as a mere musical stop-gap. But her triumph fairly startled me; and the evident dissatisfaction of some of the audience at my own careless performance, together with some sharp reprimands from the fair singer herself, piqued an

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roused me at last into animation. I determined to enter into the spirit of the thing, and play my part in the admirable fooling. I sang and acted my very best, reproached my white-robed Amina (whose stage night-dress was a master-piece of elaborate millinery such as no princess ever went to bed in) with all the tones of despair and jealous madness; clasped my plump and tightly-laced Leonora, and sighed out to the uttermost my passionate farewell. I was graciously permitted by my conquering heroine to share the honors of her triumph; I led her forth; I seized as many of her bouquets as two hands could grasp; I held back the curtain that she might squeeze her ample skirts through —she wore crinoline even when Amina in the bedroom—I attended her to her brougham, and was admitted to a gracious degree of her patronage and favor.

"I don't think the world misses Madame Reichstein so much," she remarked to me one evening.

"I don't think it does," I added, with a bitter conviction that it was only too true.

"You see," she went on, complacently, and with a quite judicial calmness and self-satisfaction, "it wearies soon, that grand lyricism of the old school. The world will have vivacity and *esprit*. One must suit the public; but one must have tact to do it. For me, I never admired Madame Reichstein; and I know she always detested me."

"Indeed you do her wrong; I have always heard her speak very well of you."

"Possible; but that was before she thought I could be a rival. One does not like a rival, especially when one is not very young. She will soon be quite *passée*, I think. How old is she?"

"I really don't know," I replied, rather coldly.

"Truly? I thought you knew her whole history. She can not be much less than forty."

"Oh yes, certainly, very much less than forty; not more than thirty, perhaps."

"Then you do know something of her? I always heard that you did. Yes, I heard that you were in love with her ever so long ago—before I was born, perhaps—and that she married somebody else, who was killed, or died, or ran away; and lately I heard that you had arranged your old quarrel, and were going to marry her; but I did not believe that."

This was all hideously annoying; and nothing but the sense I had of the absurdity which would attach to a dispute with such a girl, who, after all, talked no worse than most women will do of rivals, prevented me from giving some sort of distinct expression to my feelings.

Mlle. Finola read my face and laughed.

"*Allons!*" she said, "you are angry with me because I mock myself of your old love. I believe she is more jealous of me now than ever."

"Come now, Mademoiselle, don't be foolish. You are not ill-natured, I know, and you ought not to talk spiteful nonsense of that sort."

"Perhaps. But when a woman has carried a high head over one for a long time, it is a grand provocation to be spiteful. Without doubt, she has said as much or more of me since these last few days; but I will say not one word more if you are hurt; and don't quarrel with me, for I meant no harm; and if I had known it would touch you, I never would have said a word against her—*de moins* in your presence."

That night we were singing together in the *Trovatore*, which used to be such a favorite then; and the audience were even more than usually delighted with the astonishing little Leonora. After one of her thrilling passages (which reminded me of a canary-bird in love), the beautiful Leonora passing me quickly, said, with a beam of self-satisfaction twinkling in her bright eyes, "*She* is in the house."

I had no need to ask whom she meant. I saw Christina in a box. She was very pale and looked worse than I should have expected.

I called to see her next day, and ventured to reproach her for coming out at night so soon; but she made no answer on that subject.

"You sang very well last night," she said; "with more soul than you generally throw into your parts."

"Did I really? I was afraid I was getting through in a blank and careless kind of way. What did you think of Leonora?"

I asked the question with some doubt, unwilling to ask it, but not seeing how to avoid it. I expected some sarcastic or contemptuous answer, or some transparent affectation of admiration.

"I was both surprised and pleased with her," Christina answered, with perfect composure and apparent earnestness. "There is something quite new and fresh about her style, which makes her very interesting. I never thought she had so much originality. She quite inspired *you*."

"Did she? I am glad to be inspired by any body, or in any way."

"You don't sing so well with me. Why?"

"Perhaps because I strive to do my best too anxiously. Besides, your genius rebukes me, Christina; that is the truth. You are too true an artist for me; I don't care about little Finola."

"People say you do, in another sense."

"Do you believe them?"

"No, Emanuel, not I.—What do you think of Mr. Lyndon's daughter?"

She looked at me fixedly while she put this utterly inappropriate question.

"She is a beautiful girl, and I should think she must have a beautiful nature. How came such a father to have such a daughter?"

"You dislike Mr. Lyndon, and can not judge of him. Now *I* don't dislike Lilla."

"No; why should you?"

"Some women one could dislike, others one could not. I could not dislike your little friend Finola; I should as soon think of disliking a clever linnet. No matter; let us pass all that.

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You must sing your very best with me on Monday."

"Next Monday? You surely don't mean to sing next Monday?"

"Indeed I do."

"Is that not rashness?"

"Very likely. I mean to do it, though."

"Pray, Christina, don't attempt it. Do let me advise you—"

"My dear friend, I never take advice. My voice is quite restored, and I mean to sing on Monday. Do you think I am going to allow the season to close with your little friend in full possession?"

"You don't fear rivalry. Your place is always yours to resume when you will."

"Still, you don't know what woman's vanity is, if you think I could be content to endure a six months' exile from London with the knowledge that I had left your fascinating friend in possession of the field. No; I must win a battle before I go. Besides, I want to sing with you again; I want to be certain whether you can not sing as well with me as with her."

While we were speaking there was heard a trampling of horses in the street below; and in a moment a card was brought to Christina. When she looked at it she glanced at me suddenly, and with a sort of flush in her face, as if I were somehow concerned in the matter.

"No, I can't see her," she said to her German companion. "Yet, stay; it's very kind of her. Yes; show her into the other room, Meta."

I rose to go.

"One moment, Emanuel; oblige me by remaining one moment. I wish it particularly."

I remained; standing up, however.

Presently I heard the rustle of skirts up the stairs and in the next room.

"Now, Emanuel," said Christina, with an odd and embarrassed kind of half-smile, "you are free to go. No; you need not advise or remonstrate; it would be useless. I mean to resume my place on Monday, and dethrone your little friend, or perish in the attempt."

She laughed a somewhat forced and flickering laugh, and I left.

Who was her mysterious visitor, whom I was not to pass on the stairs even; for that was clearly the reason why Christina had detained me? Well, there could not be much mystery on the part of the visitor. As I came into Jermyn Street I saw a mounted groom leading a lady's horse up and down before the door. I knew the man's face perfectly well; he was one of Mr. Lyndon's servants. The visitor was evidently Lilla Lyndon.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A DEFEAT.

CHRISTINA carried out her resolve, and sang the following Monday night in one of the parts to which Mademoiselle Finola had given a new reading. When she came on the stage she looked weak, I thought, and nervous. I could not see her without deep and genuine emotion. I could not but think of our early acquaintance and our early love; of the promises we had made to each other of a happiness never given us to enjoy; of the bright assurance of success which always sustained her, and of the success she had won, and the slender joy it seemed to have brought her. I felt the keenest sense of delight when I heard the enthusiastic welcome she received from the house, and saw her eyes sparkle with triumph; and yet I could not help pitying her, because she loved so much a triumph like that.

She sang exquisitely in the first act—not, indeed, with all her wonted strength, as my quick and watchful ear soon discovered, but with all the soul of feeling and the perfection of articulation which belonged specially to her. Her rival's performance must have seemed, in the mind of any cultivated listener, a poor and tricky piece of artificiality when compared with her pure, noble, lyrical style. I saw her in the interval after the first act, and she was full of triumph.

"Come," she said, "I have not been so rash, after all; I have not failed, you see. I know you are glad of it, even though people do rank you on the side of your pretty Mademoiselle Finola."

"Nobody can sing as you can; and for the rest, you are only laughing at me."

"Perhaps so. Indeed, I feel in exuberant spirits to-night; partly, of course, because I have got back my voice, and am about to recover my place, but still more because I have had good news."

"Indeed! when?" I knew by her expression that she was alluding to her husband.

"To-day. Every thing is going well. He hopes to be able presently to take a little rest at Vichy; and I am going there."

"But what is going well? for I know nothing."

"*Ach!* nor I much more. But he has some enterprise in preparation, and it is going well, and he is hopeful. One may rely upon him, for he is not sanguine or extravagant; he is not a dreamer, though many people think him so. It was quite miserable to me to have to lie on a sofa all day long up there in Jermyn Street, with nothing to do but torture my brains and my heart thinking something had befallen him. But things look brighter now. I am very well now—don't you think so?"

"I would rather not see you here to-night. I doubt whether you are strong enough even yet."

"Strong enough! Quite. I could not be better. You don't think my voice was weak?"

"No; but even now you seem nervous, and look pale."

"Only because I am full of hope and triumph."

Our conversation was cut short just then, and I was a *primo uomo* once more.

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I was glad when the opera was finished. It was a weary and a painful business to me, and to more than me. Christina's triumph was not long-lived. A vague sense of languor and of weakness began to diffuse itself through the house during the second act. It became very plain that Christina had tried her strength too soon, and was not equal to the task she had so rashly set herself. It was not that she decidedly failed, but that she did not keep up her success. The music of the part became an effort to her. She grew more and more dispirited. In my anxiety that her wish for a triumph should be gratified, I would have welcomed even some sudden expression of dissatisfaction from the house, because that would probably have fired her into energy. Of course nothing of the kind was heard. The house was thoroughly sympathetic and respectful. I knew how bitter to her would be even that sympathetic respectfulness; for it was the softened shadow of failure where she had expected to be illumined by the full blaze of success.

"She's not herself at all to-night," said somebody to me during a momentary meeting. "She ought not to have sung."

"She ought not, indeed," I said, very blankly.

"I thought she was going to make a splendid thing of it at first; but it is quite plain that she is not equal to it. I am very sorry she made the attempt, for it will be a sort of triumph to little Finola and her clique. Have you seen her to-night? There she is, yonder in that box, seemingly enjoying the whole affair—the little musical humbug."

I could not help smiling at the vigorous truthfulness with which he analyzed the character of Mademoiselle.

"People have been telling me," he went on, "that you were going over to her party. No truth in that, I should think?"

"Not one solitary word of truth in it."

"No; I hardly thought you could mistake that musical-snuff-box sort of thing for singing, and those winks and shrugs for acting. I am very sorry for Reichstein, but it's only just a moment's disappointment. Let her keep quiet and recover her strength, and she'll extinguish little robin redbreast yonder."

The extinguishing, however, was not destined to take place that night. Christina's voice failed more and more. The performance dragged through lifelessly and sadly. She could not sing.

When all was over, I found her far more calm and self-controlled than I had expected.

"I have made a complete failure of it," she said.

"It was too soon for you to attempt singing; that was all. There was no question of failure."

"I ought to have taken your advice from the first; but I was so confident of success. I suppose every one perceived that I was not able to t through with it?"

"Every one knew, of course, that you had not been well, and no one expected to find that you had fully recovered your voice so soon."

"I saw your friend Mademoiselle Finola. No doubt she thinks the victory is hers now—and indeed it is. Is it not, Emanuel?"

"You have only been defeated by yourself, because you would not do yourself justice."

"I ought to have taken your advice in the matter, for it must have been disinterested. If what people say be true, you ought to be glad that I persisted in singing, and failed accordingly."

I bit my lips, and felt hurt and vexed by allusions of which I could not affect to misunderstand the meaning. This was no time, however, to take offense at any word of Christina's.

"You have not seen her since?" she proceeded, with determined and vexing purpose. "Why don't you go to her and congratulate her on her triumph?"

"I had better," I could not help answering, "go to her -or to any one who will be less ungenerous and will understand me better than you do, Christina."

"But don't go, please, just yet. I do wrong to speak in that way, Emanuel, for I don't believe one word they say about your being leagued against me with her—I could not believe it. But I can not help being vexed and spiteful after such a failure, and under her very eyes. Are you not sorry to see me so weak and vain?"

"I am, Christina; I do think such ways unworthy of you. What rivalry can there be between you and that little creature? Let her enjoy her triumph, if she thinks it one. You know what it means, and what it is worth, and how long it is likely to last. It's a shame, Christina; you have other things to think of besides her and her clique and their trumpery gossip."

"I have, indeed; and I deserve to be reminded of it. You were always like an honest doctor, Emanuel—a doctor who does not mind giving his patient a little extra pain if he can do any good by it. But you must forgive a little vexation to one who comes out for a great victory and goes home defeated. You will come and sup with us? We were to have had a celebration of my triumph; now it shall be a feast of condolence. Come; and I promise not to say another word about Finola."

"Say any thing you like about her, *meinetwegen;* but don't sink yourself even for a moment to her level."

"Well, will you come? I thought of dismissing my guests; but I will not do so if you will come."

"Let me refuse. Do not have guests. You are not fit for midnight, and talk, and excitement. Send them away."

"Ah, but I am sadly in want of a flash of excitement now. Do come, Emanuel; there are only to be a few. Mr. Lyndon—"

"No, Christina; forgive me, if I say point-blank, I don't want to meet that man, and least

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of all in your company. I dislike him, and I wish I could get you to do the same."

"Thanks. Our feelings are not likely to run quite in the same channel as regards the Lyndon family, I fancy. Meanwhile Mr. Lyndon is my friend and my husband's. Then you will not come? Good-night."

"You are offended with me?"

"A little, and justly; but I quite forgive you; only let us say no more about it. And so good-night."

This conversation took place before we were out of the opera-house. I left her, and went my way alone.

Walking homeward an hour after I passed through Jermyn Street. Coming near Christina's lodgings, I could not help thinking over the strange mixture of levity and feeling, of egotism and generosity, of ambition and frivolity, which was in that singular nature; ambition so great and jealousies so small; success discolored by such petty bitternesses; great hopes made mean by such little pleasures and excitements. I wished she had sought solitude, not society, that night. I could not bear to think of her making one at a small revelry, and accepting, and perhaps enjoying, the attentions of Mr. Lyndon. Not my Lisette!

I might have spared myself some of these reflections. When I came in sight of her windows there were no signs of revelry of any sort; all was quiet and dark. She had evidently got rid of her guests and gone home to solitude.

"I don't understand this woman yet," I thought. "For good or ill, I don't understand her. I wonder if I ever shall. Are any women ever to be understood at all?"

Christina sang no more that season, of which, indeed, but few nights remained. She had attempted too much and too soon, and had to bear the penalty—bitter to her—of enforced rest.

I did not see her any more that year. I called many times, but she could not or would not see me. After a few weeks she went to Vichy, and thence to Nice. I had several provincial and some German engagements, and our paths divided altogether for many months.

So closed our first season—for her in disappointment; for me in disappointment of more than one kind. One thing was clear: Christina and I were far more widely separated now than when she was struggling in Italy and I struggling in London, and neither knew of the other's whereabouts.

Let me dispose, once for all, of Mademoiselle Finola, who is of no further importance in this story, and need not appear in it any more. She had troops of admirers and many adorers; and among the latter she soon found an eligible husband. He was a man of large property and with a foreign title. She renounced the stage right vigorously, and betook herself to an existence of balls and receptions, in which her soul found higher delight and more fitting sphere than it could have discovered in any triumph of musical art. Her name has been forgotten among singers long ago; and she is not sorry. She carried off at the very outset the only prize she cared about; and she looked back ever after on her artistic career as one remembers the weary progress of a journey which has led him to the warmth and light of a happy home. She lived principally in London, not much caring to go back to Paris while the shoe-shop still stood in the Palais Royal arcade. I met her several times after her marriage, and she was very friendly and gracious for a while, until chance and change gradually brought us less and less within each other's sight, and at last extinguished even recognition.

The first season, then, in which Christina and I sang together had come and gone; and this was what it brought. I knew no end of people now, and I doubt if London held a lonelier man. I felt as if I were running to seed; and I longed for a new life—a new start in life. It came; but not in the way I had planned or expected. The unforeseen, as usual, came to pass.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHRISTINA'S INTERVENTION.

ANOTHER season opens, finding every thing with me much the same, to all outward appearance, as the season before. I have not yet carried out my idea of going to America; and just at the present moment the idea is rather in the back-ground. I have been in London since before Christmas, and the spring is now well advanced. I am still lodging under the same roof with Ned Lambert, though we sometimes don't meet for weeks together. I hear rather promising accounts of the poor Lyndons in Paris. I have not seen Christina, or heard from her all the winter; but I know that she has been to Nice, and that Mr. Lyndon, M.P., has been there, without his daughters; and I know what the English colony there said and thought, and, while I believe it to be false as hell, I am maddened by such whispers. I know the common talk here is that Christina is to marry Lyndon; and I wish her husband would abandon his conspiracies, and own his wife, and live with her in the face of day. I have heard something from him too; and news of him. There has been an abortive insurrection in Lombardy, and a few poor fellows have been bayoneted and shot, and some people blame Salaris for it, and say that he was there; and others condemn Mazzini, and say that *he* was not there.

Christina's engagement here, beginning rather late this year, is near at hand, and she must soon be in town. I have heard that her voice is quite restored, but that her general health is still weak.

One morning I receive a letter addressed to me in her handwriting. I see it with something like a start. The time has been n

whole senses would have stirred at the sight of that writing; and even still I can not look at it unmoved. I believe there are some early feelings one never gets over—never. I shall never conquer my detestation of the smell of certain medicines. The faintest breath of them horrifies me, as if I were again a child about to have a dose forced down my throat. I shall never lose a sense of delight called up by the smell of tar; because it brings back all the old memories of the sea and the strand and the boats. I shall never see a scrap of Christina Braun's handwriting without emotion. There are no particular mysteries to be treasured up to the end of this story, and I may say at once that I love another woman now better then I ever loved the idol of my boyhood. But I can look at her writing in a letter without any thing of a thrill, while a line of Christina Braun's hand would even still produce at the first glance a sort of electric shock.

Christina's letter was short.

"JERMYN STREET.

"MY DEAR EMANUEL,—Greeting! I have returned to town, as you will see, and I want to speak to you frankly, earnestly, as a friend. Do you believe me a true friend, above meanness, and wishing you well? If so, forget any little coldness or ill-humor I may have shown last year, when I was troubled so much mentally and physically, and come to me at once; if you do not thus believe in me, then tear up this letter, and don't come. CHRISTINA."

I went to Jermyn Street immediately. Christina's German companion received me at first; and in a few minutes Christina herself entered. She was looking rather pale, but very handsome, and bright-eyed, and splendid.

"I am glad you have come," she said; "it is friendly of you. I wished to speak to you a little." And she glanced at the other woman, who was still in the room.

"First of yourself, Madame Reichstein. You are recovered—really recovered and strong, I hope?"

"Oh yes, I think so. I was not very well all the winter; and many things made me uneasy and distressed."

She looked at me with such an expression that I knew she referred to her husband. Indeed, I believe her German companion was quite in her confidence on this point.

"But I am better now—much better; quite restored, I think. And Finola is married, and has a title, and is happy! And Ned Lambert is not married, and is not happy! I saw poor Ned the other day in Paris; dear good Ned! He is not happy—and he is uneasy about some of his friends."

Here Christina lifted her eyes and let them rest full on me, as if she would read my very heart. I don't think I met the gaze quite boldly.

"Did you meet many friends in Nice?" I asked, not knowing any thing else to say.

"Some; not many. Mr. Lyndon was there part of the time."

"So I heard."

I now looked fixedly at Christina in my turn. She did not wince.

"I believe," she said, quite carelessly, "some people say Mr. Lyndon and I are to be married.—What do you think of that story, Meta?"

Meta smiled a dry smile.

"Herr Lyndon is *ein bischen alt*—a little old," was her only remark; and in a moment or two, to my great relief, she left the room, and I prepared to hear what Christina had to say.

When Meta was present, Christina had been sitting on a music-stool, while I sat quite away on a chair near the window. When we were left alone she rose and stood near the fire-place, where, bright spring day though it was, there were blazing embers, and she motioned to me to come near.

I came and stood close beside her.

"I have asked you to come," she said, "to speak of you, not of me."

I suppose that was a note of defiance in reply to my look when we spoke of Mr. Lyndon.

There was nothing indeed I wished to say or to hear said on the subject of Mr. Lyndon and his attentions, or the talk they created. I merely bowed my head in token of assent.

Then Christina, throwing back her hair with one hand, and looking fixedly at me for an instant or two, said:

"Now, Emanuel, I have something earnest to say to you. Just a word or two of question and of warning. You will take both question and warning in a friendly spirit, will you not?"

I think I now knew what was coming, although the reader does not. I fear I flushed a little; but I answered calmly,

"Surely, Christina, I could not receive any word from you but as a friend."

"I thank you for the confidence. Now for the word, Emanuel. What about Lilla Lyndon?"

"About Lilla Lyndon! Which Lilla Lyndon? There are two."

Christina shook her head.

"Not worthy of you, Emanuel. Evasion to no purpose. Tell me to mind my own affairs and leave you to yours, and I will do so. But if you allow me to be your friend, and admit confidence, don't evade. I have always confided in you."

"I don't think you have."

"So far as I could just now. I have told you there are certain things I can not quite explain even yet, but that they shall be explained. I have never evaded your questions. I once rather anticipated them—put them for you and gave the answers, so far as any answer might be given. Now, have you not been evading my question? Did you not understand it? Did I not see in your face that you understood it?"

"Well, Christina, I suppose I did. It is no use trying to evade so keen a questioner; and

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I wish I had answered you directly at once, and not given an appearance of mystery where there is none, and no need of any. Come, put any question you will—only don't expect that any thing mysterious or romantic or interesting is likely to come in the way of answer."

"Well, then, again: what about Lilla Lyndon?"

"I can only say, so far as I know, nothing. To Lilla Lyndon I am nothing. To me she is a sweet, calm, pure-hearted creature, who seems to come out of dreamland, or poetry, or some old chronicle of saints—and that is all."

"How long have you known her?"

"Comparatively speaking, a short time. The first time I ever saw her, and spoke to her, was before I went to Italy, and I then saw her hardly five minutes. Last season I saw her with you, as you will remember. Since I came back, I—I did meet her again."

"That is, you threw yourself in her way?"

"I did; but not for any purpose of my own. I threw myself in her way because I thought I saw through her a means of helping and serving two dear friends—you know them both—Ned Lambert and Lilla, the other Lilla, Lyndon. Most truly can I say I did not selfishly do this; but I did it, and this was how our acquaintance began."

"All that I knew."

"Then that is all."

"No, not nearly all. You have met her lately?"

"I have."

"And often?"

"Yes, often."

"In plain words, you have met this girl regularly, by appointment with her, in Kensington Gardens?"

"No, Christina, that is not so. Whoever told you that part of the story told you what was not true, what was flatly false; and if it were a man, I should like to have a chance of saying as much to him. One word of this kind never passed between us. We never met by appointment. I am not so mean as to think of such a thing; and if I had suggested it, I must have been answered just as I deserved."

"Well, I hear all this with pleasure—with some pleasure, at least. But you have met several times, quite by accident, as she walked in Kensington Gardens. She has stopped and spoken to you at the railings as she rode in the Row."

"She has; and to many others too."

"Yes; the recognized friends of her family; her father's friends."

I felt myself flushing with anger. I wish I could have felt myself clear enough of conscience to reply.

"Come, Emanuel, again let me quote *Zwischen uns sei Wahrheit.* You have deliberately put yourself in the way of meeting Miss Lyndon?"

"I have."

"And you have met her so often and so regularly that you can nearly always count upon meeting her on certain days in the same place. This is true?"

"It is true."

"And she is—well, not to be hard upon your years, which would seem painfully like being hard on my own—she is at least fourteen or fifteen years younger than you—is, in fact, considerably under age?"

"She is."

"And you think you are acting honorably in this?"

"I do not!" I exclaimed, so suddenly and sharply that Christina drew back a little and glanced uneasily at the door, as if fearful lest we should have been overheard. "I do not, Christina! I count it dishonorable—frankly dishonorable. I have been ashamed of myself long enough for doing it. When a poor boy in a small sea-port, I would not have done so. But I have changed, and life has been dull and lonely to me, and I did like to meet that sweet pure girl, who seemed to me something so unlike the common world that her very presence brightened life to me. And I am afraid I liked it none the less because I detested that cold-blooded, sensuous, selfish old hypocrite, her father."

"Hush, hush, Emanuel, you don't know Mr. Lyndon—you and he seem, I can't tell how, to have a sort of instinctive aversion to each other."

"No; I don't suppose he even honors me with his aversion—and I don't care."

"Then let him pass; come to his daughter. I think I am satisfied, Emanuel. I think, as you look this thing so fearlessly in the face and don't spare yourself, you need no farther appeal—no appeal from me; still, I meant to give you a warning. Let me give it before you leave; we shall not often have such confidential conversations. Emanuel, do you love this girl?"

I turned away, and walked to the window. Christina came to me, and laid her hand upon my shoulder.

"Speak frankly to me—as to your friend or your sister. Do you love her?"

"Can *you* ask such a question?"

"Oh yes. Gone is gone, my friend, and dead is dead. I don't expect that the past could live forever in your heart, and I should be sorry if it did. Let us remember nothing but so much as may give us a right to trust in each other. You do, then, love her?"

Christina's voice trembled a little as she spoke.

"Christina, I have not thought of loving her; not in that sense. Not as I loved you—not as I—"

"Then why do you meet her?"

"Because I was lonely, and at odds with every thing, and her voice sounded sweetly in my ears, and her eyes looked kindly on me; and she was a mild delightful influence, and I was selfish enough to think of nothing else."

"Then my warning may be of use. Listen. Emanuel. If you loved the girl passionately

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and hoped to marry her, you might possibly gain your wish; for I believe there is nothing her father would not in the end consent to for her sake. But I don't believe you could be happy with her, or she with you. She is a sweet, loving child, with a child's feelings. She has, I think, no strength of character, no enduring, absorbing affection. Either she must lead a life with you to which she would be utterly unused—you know that she has never breathed our atmosphere of Bohemia—or you must live a kind of pensioner on her father, maintained as the husband whom his willful and foolish daughter would marry, and who therefore must be taken into the family circle. You wince under this. Is it not true?"

"But there never was the faintest idea of any thing of the kind. Never. Good Heavens! one may speak to a young lady without—"

"Yes, one may; but when one meets the young lady very often clandestinely—"

"Clandestinely!"

"What other word can you find for it? Clandestinely, and nothing else. When one does this, he must contemplate something, or he must have no brains and heart at all; and you have both. Emanuel, I would, at almost any risk, save you from an entanglement that could only end, I am sure, in unhappiness. I speak to you, therefore, with an openness which perhaps wise people and good people would think does me little credit. Lilla Lyndon loves you!"

I am afraid the first emotion created in me by this declaration was a pang of fierce and wild delight. It was followed quickly, as by a rush of cold air on a burning forehead, by a chilling sense of hopelessness and pain and shame.

"It can not be so, Christina; it is not so."

"It *is* so; I know it. Do you think I would talk of the poor girl so if I did not know what I was saying? It is so. I have seen her lately; I know her well; I have talked with her many times; she has come and seen me here in this room; and a thousand things, a thousand words, have betrayed her poor little secret to me. Perhaps she does not know it herself. I don't suppose she has ever indulged much in examination of her own heart. What of that? I have eyes, and can see. If she were sinking into a consumption, she might not know it; but I should know it, or you. There is nothing much to wonder at in the matter, Emanuel. The poor girl has hardly ever met any men but elderly members of Parliament, and heavy capitalists, and bishops. I know Mr. Lyndon too well to suppose he would allow any poor and handsome young curate ever to come near his daughter. *Wohlauf!* Your whole life is to her something interesting, strange, romantic. What is there to wonder at? I dare say if she had met a dove-eyed young clergyman in good time, the thing never would have happened. Mr. Lyndon is like the man in Æsop who shut up his son in a tower lest he should be killed by the lion; and, behold, the picture of a lion on the wall brought his death."

Christina spoke with flashing eyes, and with all the dramatic energy she always had shown since her girlhood, whenever she felt any interest in what she was saying. A stranger might have thought she was acting even now; but I knew she was not.

"Why do you tell me this—even if it be true?"

"Because I think I am speaking to a man of honor and spirit, and that the best appeal to you I can make is by the full frank truth."

"What would you have me do—supposing all this to be true?"

"Give up this girl—leave her—never see her again! Leave her before it be too late. She will forget you, Emanuel, believe me; she will forget you, if only you leave her in time; and she will marry somebody her father likes, and she will be a good obedient girl, and very happy, and her days will be long in the land, as the story-books put it, or the religious books, or what you will. And you will forget her; you say even now you do not actually love her. She will cry a little, perhaps; but all girls cry for something, and I really don't think it much matters for what."

"Christina, I don't like your tone—I don't like your way of speaking."

She laughed—a low, slight, scornful laugh.

"Not romantic and tender and sentimental enough, perhaps? But look what your romance and tenderness come to. You are teaching this girl to deceive her father—yes, you are—yet you don't know that you love her, and you have no object whatever in meeting her! *Tarare!* You are not a boy, Emanuel, to act so any longer."

I bit my lips. I felt vexed and ashamed, and only too conscious that I deserved all she said or could say.

"Well, Christina, I must try to deserve your better opinion, and to act with more judgment and manliness. I make no promise, and I must act for myself in my own way; but I hope you shall have no further cause to feel ashamed for me."

"That is like yourself—your old self; I am sure you will do right after all. I would not talk to you in this way, if I thought you loved this girl; I would rather say, Fling every thought away but that of loving her and holding her against the world. But you do not, and I think she will be cured at last of her love for you."

I rose to close the conversation.

"I will do my best, Christina. Existence, I suppose, is always to be a bore and a weariness and a renunciation to me. Well, I accept the situation; it will come to an end some time."

"Oh, pray, don't speak so."

"Yes; I am weary of every thing. I am sick of this wretched profession—or art, or whatever you choose to call it—for which I

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have no heart and no genius, and in which I know I can never come to any thing worth living for. I am tired of the people one meets, and the follies one commits, and the weary restraints one has to put on if he would not commit follies, and worse. What is one's motive in living? I don't know."

"Still we live, my dear; and we can but make the best of it. I at least will not see you sink away, Emanuel, into any folly or fatality without saying a word to interpose. Perhaps you think I have no right to preach or to advise?"

I waved my hand to repudiate this idea.

"But we made a pledge of friendship, Emanuel, when we entered on—that new chapter of our lives; and I have kept it in my heart as sacredly as I could, though we have not often met. And I do not—indeed, I do not—think this you have done could come to any happiness for you or for her. Perhaps I don't understand the little girl quite, you will say," and she smiled slightly; "but if I am wrong, the thing will come to pass none the less because I ask you to be open and manly, and yet careful. You ask me what is the use of living, and how one is to bear with life? My good friend, others have bitter burdens too to bear, and bitter bad temptations to resist; and I could tell you how they learn to do it, only I dare not yet; you would smile at me, or think me hypocritical, and I could not bear either. But one time I will tell you—that, and other things too which now perhaps you do not know or guess. No, don't ask for explanation; I have said enough, and too much. Now, good-by!"

CHAPTER XXV.

IN KENSINGTON GARDENS.

The conversation with Christina, which left me a little mystified in the end, has at least cleared up something of my story since the Lyndons, mother and daughter, left London. Perhaps it has told so much that I might now go straight on with the rest as it occurred, and without turning back to review or explain any thing. But it would possibly be well to give a few lines to a candid recapitulation of what had taken place, and to a chapter of my life which I always look back on with a mixture of pride and of shame.

When poor Ned Lambert was left by Lilla Lyndon, he and I spoke but a very few words over the matter: few, but enough. He was a silent fellow by nature, and a man to crush down what he felt. He knew how thoroughly I sympathized with him; and a grip of the hand from such a man or to such a man is incomparably more eloquent than words. His nature was quiet, patient, confiding; he knew that Lilla loved him, he knew that there was some reason why he must at least submit to wait; and he submitted, and asked no questions. He did not maunder, or mope, or idly repine at fate or any thing else, but only seemed to throw a fiercer energy into every thing he did, to the very smoking of a cigar; and he used to sit up half the night devising new improvements in the construction of organs. He told me he went to see Christina sometimes, but never when any body was likely to be there. He "dropped her a line," he said, when he felt anxious to say a word to her, and she always set apart a time to suit him at the earliest moment. Like most silent men, he was, I am sure, ready to be very effusive and confidential with any woman he trusted in; and I have no doubt that he told Christina every word of his disappointment and his love, and talked to her as he would not—indeed, as he could not—have talked to any man alive.

Meanwhile his occupations took him a good deal out of town. I don't know whether Lilla Lyndon wrote to him: she wrote to me sometimes, and gave me good news of her prosperous and promising occupation in Paris. Of course I told her all about Ned Lambert, and hardly any thing else, when I replied. After a while she began to tell me that she had received the sweetest, kindest letters from her cousin Lilla, whom she had never seen, but who had suddenly opened up a correspondence with her. Lilla the elder—Ned's Lilla—was greatly amazed and delighted at this, and could not understand it at all. I felt like one who is conscious of having done something delightfully good, and is proud of having it known only to himself. After a while I began to take a somewhat modified and less flattering view of my own position in the transaction.

For all had happened as I told Christina. I had acted on the idea of making Lilla the younger the angelic, celestial mediatrix in the whole of the painful business. I felt sure that her influence over her father would have power enough to induce him, for the sake of the other Lilla, to buy off or pension off in some way his wretched brother—send him to America or Australia, or any where out of the way. Many times I passed her door to no purpose. One day at last I saw her as her groom was holding her horse's head and she was about to mount. Perhaps if she had not seen me then, and cordially recognized, I might not have ventured to speak to her; but she did see me, and gave me a frank and friendly recognition; and then I went up and presented myself to her, and told her without hesitation that I came of my own counsel, unasked by any body, unknown to any body, to plead for her good offices on behalf of her cousin, the other Lilla. Whatever of secrecy might afterward have grown up, this at least was done openly, at her father's door, under the eyes if not within the hearing of her groom, in the face of day. She received me with that innocent, genial, sympathetic trustingness which nothing but purity and nobleness of heart ever can give.

I confess that as I spoke to her that time,

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and saw her pure, calm eyes turned to me, and heard her sympathetic, tender, girlish voice, I thought that between her and me lay a distance as broad as between two creatures of different worlds. It no more occurred to me as possible that such a woman could turn one thought toward me than that one of the Madonnas of marble in an Italian chapel could have come down from her pedestal in the sacred stillness of the evening, and, like Diana, kissed some mortal worshiper.

She had only known before that she had a cousin whom her father would not suffer her to see; of her uncle she had known nothing. She spoke to her father, and pleaded hard; and all she obtained was permission to write to the other Lilla Lyndon. From Lilla the elder she doubtless received encomiums of my honor and integrity and brotherly affection, and so forth, which led her to confide frankly in me. She did not despair at all of winning over her father; and but for the too frequent presence of her hard and puritanical step-sisters—she was the daughter, the only child, of Mr. Lyndon's second marriage—she might much sooner have prevailed. I learned from her that she had actually found out and tried to redeem, and petted and largely bribed, the wretched old scoundrel, her uncle; and that she really did contrive, by her influence, and still more by her money, to keep him from making any more scandal. How I sickened at the idea of her meeting the odious old hypocrite! and yet I did not dare to hint at what I thought of him. She had, with all her sweetness, a sort of resolute sanctified willfulness about her; and nothing on earth, except perhaps her father's absolute command, could have kept her from trying to do good to her outcast uncle. Meanwhile the only good of keeping him temporarily decent was that it made her father feel convinced his brother would not dare to annoy him any more, and therefore more than ever determined not to yield to any entreaty on his behalf.

What I confessed to Christina explains all the rest. We met by chance frequently. I found it was Lilla's habit to walk almost every day in Kensington Gardens for half an hour or so. It was only, so to speak, crossing the street from her own house; and her maid was generally with her. We spoke together: she had always something to say to me about the progress of her endeavors on behalf of her cousin. She did sometimes come alone. I did observe the hour and day of her coming, and I did always contrive to be there. To speak to her did always seem to sweeten and purify life for me. I did at last begin to think I was acting a mean and shameful part, although no word had ever passed between us which her mother, were she living, might not have heard. I did begin to feel ashamed of thus meeting a girl whose father would not, if he could, acknowledge my existence; and, what was worse still, I did feel conscious of a hideous, degrading sense of gratified malignity in the knowledge of the fact. This it was which most distinctly told me of my own growing degradation.

All I had told Christina was true. I did not venture to think with love of Lilla Lyndon. My God, I never thought of loving her. She seemed far too pure and good, too unworldly and childlike in her goodness, to be loved by a half-outworn Bohemian like me. She was not of my ways at all. When I saw her I only breathed a purer air for a moment, and then went back to my smoke and gas-light and Bohemia again. But Christina spoke unwisely: she counted on a romantic heroism greater than mine when she told me that such a girl was capable of loving me. Truly, I resolved that I must cease to see her; but then I also made up my mind that I must see her once more, and that I must part from her in such a way that at least she should not despise me. Suppose what Christina said to be true—and I hardly yet believed it—the worst of the evil was partly done, and it could do little more harm, no more harm, to take leave of Lilla Lyndon in such a way as should at least allow her to retain a memory of me which should not be wholly one of contempt.

I did not once think it possible that any thing but separation could come of our strange acquaintanceship. Let me do myself justice. So much there was equivocal and weak, and ungenerous and mean, in this chapter of my history, that I must protect the reputation of what little honorable feeling I always retained. Had I loved Lilla with all the passion of a youth's first love, I don't think I should have attempted to induce her to marry me: it would have seemed cruelly unfair to her. There appeared to be some truth in what Christina said. Lilla probably did not and could not know her own mind. Any feeling she might entertain for me was doubtless but the strange, sudden, ephemeral sentiment of a girl—the foolish romantic tenderness a young woman just beyond the school-girl's age sometimes feels toward her music-master or her riding-master. It will die, and be buried and forgotten in a season: to treat it as a reality would be a treachery and a cruelty. The more we hear from the women of mature years who confide in us, the more do we know that almost every girl of quick fancy and tenderness has had her budding bosom filled for a while with some such whimsical affection, which fades before the realities of life and of love, and is only remembered, if at all, with an easy, half-mirthful memory. To Lilla Lyndon, I thought to myself, I shall soon be such a memory, and no more. If I remain in London, or return to it, I shall hear of her being married to some one who brings her a fortune and a position; and I shall read of her parties in the season, and perhaps some day see in the papers that she has presented her daughter at Court; and we may meet sometimes, or she will come to hear me sing, and she will be

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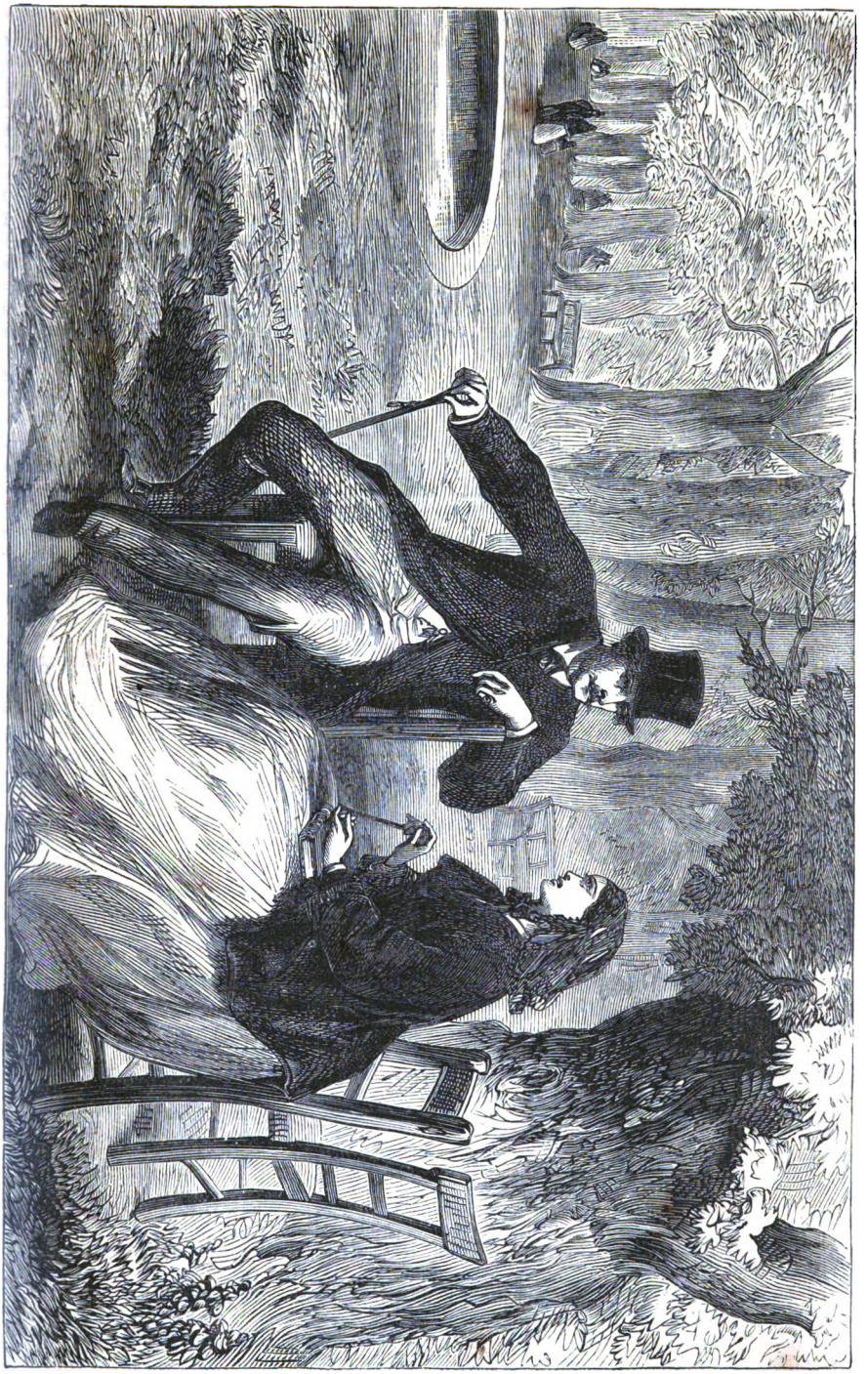

IN KENSINGTON GARDENS.

friendly and kind, and not ashamed of the fading memory of these days. I am surely the most unfortunate of beings where any word of love is in question: I seem to be able only to learn what the thing is, or may be, in order to have it taken away from me. I must really

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make up my mind to be a stern old bachelor, and have done with all thoughts of what is clearly not for me. Yesterday I was a boy too young to marry; now I am getting rather elderly for such ideas. Let me close the chapter altogether; let me see Lilla Lyndon once, only once, and bid her a kind good-by, and relieve my soul by confessing that I have done wrong, and beg of her still to think of the other Lilla; and then I will go and tell Christina what I have done, and she will at least approve; and so the drudgery of life will just go on as before.

I had walked, thus thinking, along Piccadilly, which was glaring and garish in the sun, and by Apsley House (where, when first I came to London, one might yet see "the Duke" getting into his queerly-shaped cab), into Hyde Park, and so to Kensington Gardens. When I reached the shade of the noble old trees of Kensington I walked slowly, and lingered and looked anxiously around. I came within sight of the little round basin which lies, so pretty a lakelet, in the bosom of the open, which the trees fringe all round, and whence the glades and vistas stretch out. London has nothing so exquisite as just that spot. With the old red palace near at hand, and no other building in sight, one may ignore the great metropolis altogether, and fancy himself in a park of Anne's days, embedded deep in the heart of some secluded country landscape. A slight breeze today ruffled the surface of the little pond, over which the water-fowl were skimming, and the shadows of birds fell broken on it as they flew overhead; and a light cloud could now and then be seen reflected in it. The whole scene was gracious, gentle, tender, with a faint air of melancholy about it, which was but a new grace.

On one of the seats which look upon the little basin I saw Lilla Lyndon sitting. She had a book in her hand, but she was not reading. She looked up from the water as I approached, and greeted me with a frank, bright smile. She was a very handsome girl, with her youthful Madonna contour of face, her pale clear complexion and violet eyes, and dark brown hair parted smoothly, as was then the fashion, on either brow. As her brilliant red lips parted and showed her white small teeth, a gleam of vivacity for the first time lighted the face, of which the habitual expression was a tender calmness, almost a melancholy beauty, like that of the sunlight on the water beneath her.

"I am glad you have come," she said, after she had given me her hand, "for I came here much earlier than usual to-day, and it is lonely, and I have felt rather weary. I have just been wondering—perhaps you can help me to understand it—why inanimate nature is all so melancholy, and why the least throb of life seems to be joyous. I have been looking at that pool, and the light and the leaves, and they all seem sad; and a water-fowl just plunges into the pond, and floats and dives, and the sadness seems to vanish in a moment."

"I fear I am not poet enough to understand it."

"But you ought to be a poet—in soul, at least. A singer must be a poet, I think, or how can he sing? You have made me feel poetic many times."

"So I dare say has a harp or a violin. I have as much music in my soul as the fiddle."

"Oh, but that is nonsense. There is something I read lately that reminds me of a word or two I once heard from you about music. I have been reading that novel of Richter's you told me to get—the *Flegeljahre*. Well, the poet-brother praises the flutist-brother's exquisite performance; but unfortunately he gives as his reason for admiration that the music brought up all the most tender and delightful associations to his memory. I should have thought that the highest praise: should not you?"

I shook my head.

"No? Well, so too says Vult the flute-player. He is quite disappointed, and shakes his head, and says: 'I see, then, that you did not understand or appreciate the music at all.' So it is with me. When I most delight in music, it is because it brings up something which is not in the music itself."

"And I too, Miss Lyndon; and therefore I know I am not a true musician."

"Then who is?"

"Well, Madame Reichstein is, and many others."

"Yes; papa always says Madame Reichstein is. I delight in Madame Reichstein myself, both on the stage and off; more even when off, I think."

"You have met her lately?"

"Yes, several times. I make papa take me to see her. I never knew a great singer before—a woman, I mean. I think her very charming. Is she what people call a lady?"

"Not what Belgravia calls a lady, certainly. Her father was a German toymaker."

"You are angry with me for my question," said Lilla, opening her violet eyes widely, and looking at me with quite a pathetic expression, "and you think me a fool; but do you know the reason I asked the question? I had a reason."

"I don't know the reason, Miss Lyndon."

"Just this, then: somebody—a woman to whom I talked of Madame Reichstein—chose to speak rather contemptuously of her, and said she was not a lady. I asked rather sharply, why not? and she answered that she was not a lady of rank off the stage, like Madame Sontag and somebody else, I don't know whom; and that she is not received in society. So much the worse for society, I thought."

"I suppose society has its laws every where. I don't suppose Madame Reichstein cares. I am sure she is not ashamed of having been born poor, any more than I am, Miss Lyndon. My father was a boat-builder, my mother sewed gloves; my genealogy goes no farther back. I don't suppose I ever had a grandfather."

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"You speak coldly, or angrily, as if you thought I cared about people's grandfathers," said Lilla, gently; "I wish I had not said any thing about Madame Reichstein, whom I think I admire as highly as any body can. You can not suppose I really care whether her father was a poor man or a rich man?"

"Frankly, Miss Lyndon, I doubt whether people ever get quite over these feelings. Perhaps it is better not. I am always angry with any of my own class who try to get out of it; and I think them rightly treated when they are reminded of their social inferiority."

I suppose I was speaking in a tone of some bitterness. Lilla's remark, innocent as it was, had jarred sharply on me, and seemed to point the painful moral of the course into which I had been drifting. Even this child had eyes to see that she and I had come from a different class, and belonged to a different world. I had been standing beside the seat on which she sat. She looked up quickly as I spoke; then rose and stood near me, and with the gentlest action in the world, laid her small hand on my arm.

"I see that I have offended you," she said, "by my thoughtless talk. But trust me, that if I thought less highly of Madame Reichstein, and—and of *you*, I should never have spoken in such a way. I did not suppose it possible you could have taken my words as you have done. It humiliates me even more than you. Pray, pray don't misunderstand me; I have no friend I value like you."

Her voice was a little tremulous in its plaintiveness, and the kindliness of her expression was irresistible. Even wounded pride could not stand out against it.

"Your friendship, Miss Lyndon, is one of the dearest things I have on earth—almost, indeed, the only thing that is dear to me. Let me preserve it. Were you going home? and may I walk just a little way with you?"

"Yes, I was going home; and I shall be glad of your companionship yet a little."

With all our "clandestine" meetings, we had never walked together before. Our sin against propriety had been limited to just the occasional meetings, the exchange of a few words, and the partings. Now I did not offer her my arm; we walked side by side down one of the glades which stretches nearly parallel with the road. A little girl, poorly dressed, darted across our path, then suddenly stopped, and looking shyly at me, dropped a courtesy to my companion, and was going on, when Lilla, addressing her as "Lizzy," brought her to a stand. She talked to the child about her father, who had a sore arm, and was out of work; and her mother, and her brother, and so on; and I heard her say she was going to see them that day; and she took out a little purse, and gave the girl something.

"One of my children," she said in explanation; "I have a school; a very little one. I have asked Madame Reichstein to come and see it, and she will sing for the girls. I owe a great deal to these children. They give me occupation; I should not know what to do with my existence but for them, our house is so very dull. I suppose a home without a mother always is. Papa is so busy with Parliament and politics, and so much out."

A moment's silence followed. Then I took heart of grace and said,

"Just now, Miss Lyndon, you were kind enough to say you thought of me as a friend; and I asked you to let me deserve your friendship—"

"Have you not deserved it? Did you not teach me how I might perhaps serve and help those who have claims on me? Have I not heard how true and steady a friend you were to my cousin and her mother, and her poor father? Have I not seen all this? Mr. Temple, I don't know why papa is so resolute in refusing to meet or help my uncle. I suppose he has good reason; but I myself believe only in mercy and kindness, and—and love. I don't think our religion teaches us any thing else; and at least I don't believe in human justice when it only punishes. I must try to bring my people together; and I hope to succeed. If I do, will not that be a great thing? And how could it have been done but for you?"

"If it can be done, it would have been done without me. But I am only too glad to hear you speak so kindly and hopefully. I am a believer in your religion of pity and mercy and love—or in none. But I have to deserve your friendship otherwise than in this easy and pleasant way. Miss Lyndon, I have no right to be with you here to-day. I have no right to walk by your side. I have no right to come, as I have come, for the sole purpose of meeting you. All this is wrong in me, and wrong toward you. You are much younger than I am, and your kindness and friendship make you only too thoughtful for others—not for yourself. I must not see you any more in this way—and I could not help telling you—and good-by."

She looked up at me with a sudden startled, pained expression, and then her eyes fell, and over her clear pale face there came a faint, faint flush.

"Not to meet any more?" she said at last. "Then I have done wrong in being here?"

"Not you—oh, not you. But I, Miss Lyndon, I have done wrong; I came here, day after day, to meet you."

"Yes; I knew it—I expected you; I wished you to come."

"But I am not your father's friend—*he* would not approve of my meeting you."

"Who is to blame, Mr. Temple, but yourself? Have I not many times asked you to let me bring papa and you to be friends? Have I not often told you I felt convinced that if he only knew you, he would appreciate you as I do?"

"You have often said so; but you can not know how men of the world think—"

"But I do know papa; and I know that

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there are few things I could ask him which he would not grant. One of the things I have determined on is, that he shall know you, and appreciate you, and like you. I will tell him this very day. Why should you not come to our house, and be of our friends, and brighten our home a little for us, instead of some of the dull and pompous and uncharitable and unloving people who come to us? Mr. Temple, if you think there is any thing lowering to you in the way our acquaintanceship has been carried on so far, let me bear the blame of it, and there shall be no more cause for blame. I will tell papa this very day—I will tell him all."

"That I have met you, and walked with you?"

"Yes, every word. Why not? I will tell him the whole truth, and he will believe me. I will tell him we met here because I wished to meet you, and you were too proud to come to our house. And I will tell him that you must come often."

"And teach you to sing, perhaps?" I could not help asking, with a rather melancholy smile.

"Yes; why not? that is, if you would; only I suppose you are again too proud, and will be offended if I even mention such a thing. I should think it delightful."

"Miss Lyndon, every word you say only shows me, more and more, with what nobleness and innocence—I must say it—you have acted, and how unworthy of such goodness and such companionship I am. Do follow out your right impulse; do speak to your father thus frankly, and abide by what he says."

"I will; and I will tell him you told me to do so. You will find you do not understand him as well as I do. Only you must promise you will come to our house when he asks you."

"I might safely promise on such a condition, and the result be just the same, but I will not. I must at last be open and frank with you, who are so candid and sincere with me. No, Miss Lyndon, I can never enter your house as a sort of tolerated inferior, even if your father did become as good-natured as you expect."

"Inferior! You pain me and humiliate me. Have I acted as if I thought you an inferior? Am I, then, in your judgment, capable of giving my warm friendship and my confidence to an inferior? For shame, Mr. Temple! Have more faith in yourself and your art, and the beautiful life it gives. Have more faith in *me*."

"I have more faith in you than in any thing under heaven. But I know what your father would think of me. I know what he would say, and with only too much appearance of justice. I can not, even for you, bear this, and bear it too to no purpose. Speak to him, if you will, but I could never meet you under his roof except on conditions which I could never bear, or with an object which is hopeless and impossible. No, Lilla—no, Miss Lyndon—"

"You may call me Lilla; I wish to be called so."

"No, Lilla; I have come up from the lowest life, but I have some sense of honor, and some pride. I have done wrong thus far—I never saw it so clearly as now; but it shall be done no more. I have your interest and your happiness now far too deeply at heart to think in the least of any pain it may give me—or even *you*—to do right. To meet any more would be hopeless for me, and useless generosity on your part."

"Then our friendship comes to an end? I am sorry. I wished that we might be always friends—I felt life less weary."

"Our friendship surely shall not come to an end. It shall live always, I hope."

"But I don't understand why this should be so—why you should haughtily refuse our friendship."

"You don't understand it now, Lilla; but you will one day, and you will feel glad—"

"I am very unhappy."

There was a calm, clear sincerity in the way she spoke these words which was infinitely touching. Was it not likewise infinitely tempting? Let those who, like me, yet young, have been cast away prematurely from love, and have long felt compelled to believe that supreme human joy cut off from them forever—let them suddenly be placed face to face with a beautiful, pure, and tender girl, and see the expression I saw trembling on her lips and sparkling in tears on her eyelids, and say if it was nothing to stand firmly back, and leave her, as I did. When for my sins I am arraigned hereafter, as good people tell us we shall be, before some high celestial bar, I hope I shall be able to plead that one effort as a sacrifice in mitigation of the heavenly judgment.

"I am very unhappy," she said. "And now that you have spoken thus, you have made me think for the first time that I have been doing wrong. I hoped to have brought all my people together, and healed the quarrels and dislikes which are so sad and sinful in a family; and I hoped to have made papa and you know each other and love each other—and he *could* appreciate you—and to have made much happiness; and now I only feel ashamed, as if I had been doing something secret and wrong; and you tell me we must not be friends any more. I have had no friends before; the people we know are formal and hard, and only care for politics and money; and I don't care for their society, and I can not school my feelings into their way. But what is right, Mr. Temple, we must do; and I think only the more of your goodness, and am all the more sorry, because you have told me what I ought to do. Good-by!"

She spoke this in a tremulous voice that vibrated musically and sadly in my ears, as indeed it vibrates there now. There was a look of profound regret and profound resignation on her face, which to my eyes, unaccustomed to see men and women obey aught but their mere impulses, good or bad, seemed saint-like, heaven-like. Even then I think I only felt the more deeply how little such a nature could in the end

have blended with mine; how imperative and sacred was the duty which divided us in time. I could have wished that death awaited me in five minutes; but I did not flinch. I did not say one tender word, which might have recklessly unsealed the fountains of emotion in that sweet and loving nature.

"Good-by, Mr. Temple." She put her hand in mine. I pressed it reverently, rather than warmly.

"Good-by, Miss Lyndon."

There was a pause; neither spoke; and then we separated.

I turned and gazed after her. Her tall, light, slender figure looked exquisitely graceful as she passed under the shadow of the trees, and over the soft green turf. I see her still as I look back in memory; I see her figure passing under the trees. I see the whole scene; the grass, the foliage, the sunlight, the graceful, tender, true-hearted girl, who would have loved me.

Her handkerchief had fallen, and lay on the grass. I took up the dainty little morsel of snowy cambric, and saw her initials in the corner. I thrust it into my breast: I would keep it forever! To what purpose? It is not mine; what have I to do with relics and memorials of Lilla Lyndon? I ran after her with it. She turned round quickly when she heard the footsteps behind her.

"Your handkerchief, Lilla—you dropped it; that is all. Good-by."

She smiled a faint acknowledgment; but, though her veil was down, I could see that her eyes were swimming in tears. She did not speak a word; and I turned and went my way, not looking back any more, for I knew that the angel who had perchance been a moment under my tent had departed from it.

I went back to the side of the little basin, and sat for a while in the chair where she had sat; and I leaned my chin upon my hand, and looked vacuously at the rippling water. I have obeyed you, Christina, I thought; I have made this sacrifice. Heaven knows how little of it was made for Heaven! Would *you* ever, under any circumstances, have loved me as *she* might have done? And now all is at an end; I have lost *her!* What remains?

I believe old-fashioned theologians used to say that man had always an angel on one side of him and a devil on the other. My angel, as I have said, had left me; but I suddenly found that I was favored with the other companionship.

I heard footsteps near me. I did not look up; what did it matter to me who came or went in Kensington Gardens now? But a mellow rolling chuckle, to which my ears had lately been happily a stranger, made me start.

"Ill met by sunlight, proud Temple," said the voice I knew only too well. And Stephen Lyndon the outcast—Lyndon of the wig—came stamping and rolling up. I think I have already said that his gait often reminded me of a dwarf Samuel Johnson. He had a habit, too, of rolling his jocular sayings about on his lips, which made the odd resemblance still odder. It was some time since I had seen him, although I knew of late that he too used to walk in Kensington Gardens. He was neatly and quietly dressed now, and, in fact, looked rather as if he were going in for calm respectability. His wig was less curly, his hat was not set so jantily on the side of his head, and he was not smoking a cigar; he wore black cotton or thread gloves; he had a bundle of seals pendent from his old-fashioned fob. Virtuous mediocrity, clearly; heavy uncle, of limited means, reconciled with Providence.

I looked at him thus curiously because I had come to know that one must always study his "get-up" a little in order to understand his mood of mind or purpose. Taking all things together, I came to the conclusion that he had watched and waited for me deliberately, and that he had something to say. I did not seek to avoid him, or get rid of him. Why should I? Lilla Lyndon held him good enough to speak to her; how should I think myself lowered by his companionship? I resolved even to do my best to be courteous and civil to him.

"How do you do, Mr. Lyndon? We have not met for some time."

"No, Temple—a pity too; such congenial spirits, and now, I may almost say, companions in a common enterprise. We have not met lately; but I have seen you—I have seen you when you didn't think it, wild youth. You're looking well, Temple, as far as flesh and worldly evidences go; you are growing stout, I think, and your get-up is rather different from what it was when I first had the honor of meeting you—let us say half a century ago. Ah, Fortune has been kind to you. You are no longer the wretched poor devil you used to be. I have heard of your success, Temple, with a sort of pride, not unmingled with surprise, let me say; for, between ourselves, I never thought there was much in you except voice. I told Madame Reichstein so the other day."

"Indeed! You have seen Madame Reichstein?"

"I did myself the pleasure of calling on her; we are old friends. *She* does not forget old friends, or turn up her nose at them, as certain smaller people do, to whom we will not allude more particularly. Now, *she* is a great success: there is genius, if you want it, not mere lungs. Yes, I disparaged you, Temple, to her; I said I thought there was nothing in you. You are not offended?"

"Not in the least."

"I thought you wouldn't. Between old friends, you know; and I never concealed from you my honest opinion. You see, Temple, *I* am an artist in soul. I know real musical genius when I find it—rather! Yes, I told her so."

"Well?"

"Well, she didn't seem to like it. She conveyed to me—delicately, of course, for she

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quite a lady in manner, that let me tell you—she conveyed to me that she thought me an impertinent old idiot. Of course I didn't mind. She is prejudiced in your favor; any body can see that with half an eye. May I sit beside you a moment?"

"Certainly; but I am going immediately."

"I have a word or two to say first; if you like, I'll walk your way. Rather not? Well, then, let us just sit here for a few moments. After all, Temple, what lovely spots there are in London! What could be a more charming bit of woodland than this? it might make a painter of any body. To know London, Temple, is, if I may paraphrase a famous saying, of which I dare say you never heard, a liberal education. Where in the Bois de Boulogne, or the Thiergarten, or the Prater, is there so delicious and so natural a glimpse as that?"

He pointed with his cane down the glade into which Lilla Lyndon had just disappeared.

"I saw you studying that vista just now, Temple. Evidently you have an artist's eye, although I confess I never suspected you of any thing of the kind before; but you looked down that vista as only an artist or a lover could."

"I like Kensington Gardens very much. But you were saying, I think, that there was something particular you wished to speak of."

"To be sure, so I was; I approached you for the purpose. But I am such a lover of natural beauty that it makes me forget every thing, especially business. Do you know, Temple, I don't believe a man can be really religious who does not appreciate the beauty of that sunbeam on the water, and that shadow on the grass. I don't think such a man ought to expect to go to heaven. Do you?"

"I don't think some of us ought to expect to go to heaven in any case. But you had something special to say?"

"Hard and practical as ever! Ah, Temple, I fear there is in you very little of the true artist nature. Well, it makes my present business the more easy; I might perhaps find it hard to open it gracefully to a poet. To the business, then. The fact is, Temple"—and here he suddenly abandoned the tone of rhodomontade blended with banter which was so common with him, and assumed a cool, dry, matter-of-fact way—"the fact is, I see the whole game; I have seen it all along."

"Indeed! May I ask what game—whose game?"

"No nonsense, Temple; it won't do with me; I am quite up to the whole thing. We have been rowing in the same boat this some time, although, if you will pardon me for applying such a dreadful old joke, not perhaps with the same sculls. She is a charming girl, Temple, and we're both very fond of her, in a different sort of way; and she will have a good fortune of her own, even in the lamentable event of her displeasing her respectable and virtuous father, and so causing him to leave all is money to her step-sisters. Her mother took good care of her in that way. Ah, Temple, ingenuous youth, what a sharp fellow you are!"

I got up to go away, disgusted beyond endurance.

"Look here, Mr. Temple; I want to talk to you fairly and like a man. Do drop your rantipole high-tragedy airs for once. You have been meeting my charming and innocent little niece here day after day; so have I. It goes to my heart sometimes to take the good little girl's money; but I do take it. She doesn't want it, you know—and *we* do. Now your game is just the same, only bigger and completer: you mean to marry the girl, and have her fortune."

"It is utterly and ridiculously false; and were not anger thrown away on such a creature as you—"

"You would say something dreadful, no doubt. Don't; anger is thrown away on me. Glad you have the good sense to see that. This is the point, then. *I* don't object to your marrying my niece; you have my consent—on conditions. I detest Goodboy so, that, only for the sake of the dear creature herself, I would fall on my knees and thank Heaven if she married a pork-butcher's boy or a chimney-sweep, just to spite him and wring his gutta-percha heart: I would, by the Almighty! Now, then, Temple, to business. If you promise to make it worth my while, I'll help you in this. You shall have my help and countenance—what you will. I want a modest income, made safe to me and beyond any confounded creature's control. Are you prepared to enter into terms? Look here, Temple. Beauty, virtue, and plenty of money, with a venerable uncle's blessing! all at your command. It is simply a question of how much you are disposed to stand for my co-operation. If I am not for you, Temple, I am against you. Make terms with me, or I go over to the enemy; and Goodboy shall know all."

"Now, Mr. Lyndon, I have listened to you, I think, with great patience and self-control. Pray listen to me. It is not, I suppose, any longer your fault that you can not understand what good intentions and honor and honesty mean; so I shall not waste any words to that purpose on you."

"That's a good fellow. I do detest virtuous indignation in men; especially when combined with eloquence."

"I shall only say, you don't understand me. Go and do your best; do any thing you please. Say any thing you can to pain and grieve that one sweet and noble nature which has stooped to you and done you kindness. Her you may grieve, but you can not injure. Play the spy, the liar, the calumniator, the swindler, as you like; but don't talk of terms or rogue's bargains with me. I would not buy your silence at the cost of a sixpence. I would not accept any conditions of yours to save my life—and hers."

"That is your answer?"

"That is my answer."

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"Now look here, Temple, my good fellow; another man might be offended, but I don't mind any of your nonsense. Just don't be in a hurry—don't be a fool. Really, Temple, I want to settle down in life, and live quietly and pleasantly. I begin to tire of racketing about, and living on chance, and billiards, and soft-headed spoons, and all that. I am getting, you see, a little into years, though people tell me I'm looking wonderfully well yet. Can't we manage this thing nicely? You want that charming girl—why not, old boy?—and, of course, her money. I want just a neat little annual sum—a little pension—just to keep me from being a trouble to my friends, and so forth. I'll undertake, on very reasonable conditions, not to trouble even Goodboy—whom may a truly righteous Providence confound!—and, in fact, to take myself off to Nice, or some pleasant, sunny place—I love warm climates—and never come back any more. Now do, like a good fellow, just think of that. Do you know—don't laugh at me!—I positively would rather please that dear girl than not; and if my turning respectable on a decent pension, and taking myself off, would do it, I really am open to terms. I don't mean to say that I am prepared to make any downright sacrifice for my niece—of course, between men of the world, that sort of thing is nonsense; but I would rather serve her than not. I should like to live quietly at Nice; and upon my word, if my wife would only oblige me and show her conjugal devotion by departing to that world where all virtuous persons ought to wish to go, I don't know but that I should entertain the idea of marrying some nice little girl myself. There *are* nice little girls, Sir, let me tell you, who would not be entirely averse to such a notion. Now think of all this, Temple. Think of me! Think of what a thing it is to do a good action, and to play your own game and torment your enemies at the same time."

He spoke in quite a solemn and pathetic tone.

"I have given you my answer. Let me pass. I don't want to speak more harshly, or to lose my temper."

"Confound it!" he exclaimed, with a puzzled air; "I can't understand this at all. By Jove! the fellow must be privately married to her already, or he never would talk in this cock-a-hoop and lofty kind of way. There is an alarming air of security and confidence about him.—Now, Temple, fair is fair, you know. I always thought you too honorable for that sort of thing. Do speak out like a man, and tell me what is your game. Imitate my candor, and speak out."

I pushed past him; he caught me by both arms, and looked earnestly, scrutinizingly into my face. I could not get away from him without an exertion of positive violence. His grip was wonderfully strong; and there were some groups of people scattered here and there sufficiently near to make me feel anxious to avoid any scene. I stood there and allowed him to study my face. It was rather a ludicrous business. With his twinkling beady black eyes he peered up into my face, standing on his toes meanwhile, and his head still hardly touching my chin. His sensuous, expressive lips were working unceasingly with eagerness and curiosity; and in his whole expression, attitude, manner, eyes, there was a strange blending of the cunning of a detective and the wildness of a lunatic. Far back in the depths of those keen, twinkling eyes there was surely, one might think, the reflection of a madman's cell. The first impression, as I looked at him, was a mere sense of the ridiculous, and I could hardly repress a laugh; the next was a sense of the horrible, and I found it not easy to keep down a shudder. It would not be pleasant to wake some night and find such a grip on one's arms, and see such eyes peering into one's face.

When he had scrutinized me apparently to his satisfaction his countenance underwent a sudden and complete change of expression. Curiosity and eagerness had now given way to mere contempt. He literally flung himself off from me.

"Pah!" he exclaimed; "the idiot has done nothing of the sort. His enemy's daughter is safe enough so far as he is concerned. He walks in Kensington Gardens *pour des prunes*."

He put his hat a little more jantily than before on the side of his head, nodded an ironical farewell, and I saw him a moment after opening up a conversation with a smart nurse-maid who was in charge of two obstinate children.

I went my way, not rejoicing, Heaven knows, but at least relieved.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LILLA GONE.

I HAVE never greatly troubled myself to study human character. I have especially rather avoided studying my own. I do not know much about the springs of human action. I am neither a moral philosopher nor a psychologist, therefore I can not pretend to explain the manner in which the separation I have described in the last chapter affected my character and my ways. But I know how it did actually affect me, and I record the fact. With the parting from Lilla Lyndon there fell away from me all inclination for the kind of indolent distraction in which last year I had been seeking consolation only too often. I despised and detested it all; I shook it completely off me in a moment. I knew myself redeemed from it, and I knew that the whole change was made in me, a man of maturing years, by the sad smile of a girl.

I knew a man once who told me, in one of those rare bursts of confidence in which generous and reserved men sometimes indulge, how he had lived for ten long years of the most trying part of existence, defiant of temptation, or

the memory of a kiss. He was not a sentimental or a weakly man; he did not pretend to be what pious people call a good man. I never knew whether he believed in any particular theological dogmas. He was a man of strong, passionate emotions; a man to go widely astray under certain circumstances; a man who had gone astray. A good, pure woman loved him and trusted him; he had no money, and he went away to the United States to look for some, that they might be married. When he was going, she herself, spontaneously and for the first time, put her arms round his neck and kissed him. He did not make any formal resolve that his lips, like those of Coriolanus, should virgin it till he should return and give back that kiss again, for he was not one of your deliberately good and Spartan men at all. But he told me that he never knew temptation in the mean time which could for a moment efface the memory of that kiss. He lived on the memory, pure as a King Arthur, for ten years; and then he came back, and they were married.

Perhaps such things are not so uncommon as we think; only that few men will venture to confess purity. At all events, I believe it to have been true in this case. I could understand it the better, knowing what impression the parting from Lilla Lyndon made on me. I think I could have carried a kiss from her unstained into the darkness of the grave.

I avoided Christina, and indeed every body, as much as I could. I observed that Mr. Lyndon was growing more and more attentive to her; and this fact alone, were there no other reason, would have kept me from her.

Her husband suddenly reappeared in town. During his stay of last season he and I had taken a strong liking for each other; and now that he returned he came to see me at once. I happened to be out when he called; and as his card bore no address, I resolved to go to Jermyn Street, see Christina, if she should happen to be alone, and learn where he was to be found. When I got to her house, however, I heard that she had visitors; and knowing who one of them was, for I saw his carriage at the door, I would not be of the number. So I turned away.

This was only three or four days after the meeting and parting described in the last chapter. I left the door of Christina's lodgings to avoid one Lyndon, in order to meet another. It was with a sense of detestation that I suddenly found myself confronted on the Jermyn Street pavement by my odious Stephen Lyndon. What on earth—what out of the lower world—brought him there? As I turned my eyes away from Christina's house I nearly run against him or over him.

"I have been signaling you," he said, "from across the street; but either you couldn't or wouldn't see. Only a word or two now. I sha'n't detain you. Our society now isn't pleasant to each other. But I want to know whether you have reconsidered what we spoke of the other day in Kensington Gardens?"

"No, I haven't. There's nothing to reconsider—let me pass!"

"Isn't there? Perhaps! I have news for you. Goodboy is on the scent; and he has ordered *her* off."

"What do you mean?"

"Thought I could arouse your attention! He has taken her or sent her away out of London. Carried her away from me as well as from you! I didn't count on that. 'Twas I gave him the hint—I told you I would; but I never expected that he would do what he has done—absolutely prohibit the poor little thing from holding any communication with me—with me, her uncle, who loves her! Yes, by Jupiter Ammon, I do love her! Forty thousand Goodboys could not, with all their quantity of love, make up my sum! It's all your fault, with your confounded scruples and nonsense. If you had listened to reason, you and I could have managed this splendidly. Now she is gone from both of us."

"How do you know?" I inquired, ashamed of myself for asking the question.

"*She* wrote me a line, poor little innocent—the last, she says; and inclosed me a trifle. It's the spirit of the gift one values, Temple, not the paltry amount; and she hopes all may yet be reconciled; and she will never fail to work for that sacred end—and that kind of thing, you know. By Jove, Temple, what a little angel in petticoats she is! I have no doubt she'll be a ministering angel, old boy, when you and I lie howling; though I, God knows, was made for goodness and religion, and am a man more sinned against than sinning."

"Well, what do you want of me?"

"Simply to ask, are you going to stand this?"

"Stand what?"

"That fellow packing away that sweet, loving girl to some abominable hole in the country."

"I suppose Mr. Lyndon has a right to the care of his daughter. Some fathers do care for their children. I have no claim on Miss Lyndon."

"Then I'll tell you what, if you're going to stand it, I'm not. I'll spoil them all; and that's why I'm here. Temple, I wish you no harm—I don't indeed: in fact, I rather respect you; and I think in my anger yesterday I did you injury to no purpose, and myself too. On the whole, I like your chivalric nonsense; there is a far-off flavor of youth and poetry, and that sort of rot about it, which refreshes me like a scent of the distant sea. If I had a son, Temple, I think I shouldn't be very sorry if he acted as you did; for, by the good God, that girl would run away with you to-morrow if you asked her! Well, then, I don't want to injure *you;* but I'll crush them."

"Whom do you mean?"

"My hated Eteocles Lyndon, or Polynices Lyndon, whichever you please; and the woman he is following, and my old friend and colleague, the Carbonaro yonder. I'm on the track of

something, Temple; and trust me, I'll run it down. *They* are making use of Goodboy: he fancies he is making use of them. *I* know what it's all about. *Vive la République sociale et démocratique. Viva Mazzini!* Piff, paff!"

He nodded his head, jerked, and gesticulated vehemently, like a Neapolitan going mad.

"I don't understand you at all."

"Dare say you don't! Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck; keep yourself out of their schemes, Temple, and then I sha'n't have to harm you. I am in the swim already, I promise you. Good-by. You don't understand how Goodboy came to be an Italian conspirator, then, don't you? Hum, ha! Did you ever read Churchill?—

'By my life,
This Davies hath a mighty pretty wife!'"

He winked his beady old eyes, then again indulged in a variety of gesticulations admirably imitated from the Italian, made a pantomimic gesture expressive of the rapid and frequent use of the stiletto, exploded into his old familiar rolling chuckle, raised his hat to me, and turned away.

Looking back a moment after I saw him standing on the steps of Cox's hotel engaged in conversation with a waiter, and smoking a cigar with as lordly an air as if the whole house and the street too belonged to him.

I thought little of his hints and threats: he was always vowing and menacing, and nothing ever came of it; an unconquerable levity and fickleness always seemed to interpose happily between him and any serious deed of harm to others; nor did I see what possible danger could come on Christina and her husband through his influence. So little belief had I in any thing he said that I did not even place unreserved faith in his story about Lilla Lyndon, although that, Heaven knows, looked likely enough; at least, I earnestly hoped it might not prove true. If I had been the means of creating a discord between that girl and her father I had surely reason to blame and hate myself. I will find out if it be true, and if it be I will at least do practical penance in this way: I will go to Mr. Lyndon, and humble myself before him—him whom I detest—and speak to him as one man of honor speaks to another, and pledge him my earnest, solemn word that I will never see his daughter again; and tell him that I am resolved on leaving this country, not to return. This must satisfy him: he shall be satisfied, if any pledge, if any humiliation of mine can do it. I will not be the cause of estrangement between him and his daughter; I will not have that great sin upon my soul. If I have done wrong, I can at least endeavor to undo it, and to do penance for it.

I will do it this moment.

I hailed a hansom, and drove to Connaught Place.

"Is Miss Lilla Lyndon in town?" I asked of the footman who opened the door.

"Miss Lilla have left town," was the answer.

"To-day?"

"To-day, Sir."

The man's expression was, I thought, conclusive.

"Is Mr. Lyndon at home?"

"Mr. Lyndon is at home, Sir; but he have give instructions he is engaged particular."

"Will you give him that card, and say I have the strongest reasons for wishing to speak to him for five minutes? Say I would not disturb him, but that I have the strongest reasons."

The man asked me to step into the hall while he took the card to his master. As the reader will remember, I had been in this house once before, and I knew that Mr. Lyndon's study was only divided by the wall from where I stood.

In a moment I heard Mr. Lyndon say, in a loud, strident tone, as of one who determines that his words shall be heard by those whom they concern:

"I decline to see Mr. Temple!"

The man came out and gave me the message, looking rather reluctant and abashed, I am bound to say in justice to him.

Still I was resolved that no mere humiliation should deter me from acting as I felt myself bound in honor and conscience to do. I clenched my fingers, bit my lips, crushed down my emotions, and made a new attempt.

"Will you be good enough to say to Mr. Lyndon that a very grave misunderstanding may be wholly avoided if he will see me for five minutes?"

The man went in, and I heard again, in the same tone, the same words:

"I decline to see Mr. Temple!"

"I told you," said the servant when he came out—and he spoke in a half-remonstrating, half-deprecating kind of way—"I told you he was particularly engaged. He always is particularly engaged, and can't see no one at this hour, just before he goes to the 'Ouse."

The man made this observation in the purest good-nature. He wished to soften the snub to me, and to put it on the mere ground of his master's intense occupation. I caught at the suggestion, however. I took out my purse and slipped a sovereign into his hand, rather glad of any way to testify my appreciation of his good-nature while buying one more service of him.

"I am sorry to have disturbed Mr. Lyndon," I said; "and I ought to have known that he is busy just now. Will you, however, kindly go back again, and say that if he will name any time and place—the House, or Brooks's" (of which I knew he was a member), "or anywhere, I shall be only too glad to wait on him, and say half a dozen words which it is very important he should hear."

I don't know whether the man could have delivered this long message; but I think he was saved the trouble. The moment he opened Mr. Lyndon's door I heard the words:

"I decline to see Mr. Temple now or at an

other time, any where. I decline to hold any kind of communication with him. I am busy; do not disturb me any more. Give that message distinctly, and say there is none other."

And this was the end of my resolve to humble myself, and try to do good! I came away with a burning face and a raging heart. All that anger and hate and sense of wounded pride could stir up to embitter human nature was working within me just then. No wonder men sold their souls in the old days, when there were powerful bidders for them from the infernal world—no wonder they sold their souls for revenge on some enemy.

I crossed into the Park, and was walking slowly under the trees. Presently I heard a quick step following mine, and the rustle of a dress came near me, and an emphatic little cough appealed to my attention. I might not have heeded, but a woman's voice at last said, and apparently very much out of breath too:

"Oh, if you please, Mr. Temple, Sir!"

I turned round, and saw a pretty, flushed little face near me—the face of a well-dressed young woman, who had lady's-maid printed in every lineament of her countenance and motion of her limbs. I did not recognize her at first.

"Don't you remember me, Sir? I am Miss Lilla's maid. Which master was very angry, Sir; and Miss Lilla took on a great deal; and she has gone with Miss Lyndon (our eldest daughter, Sir) to the country for a while; and master's going down soon. Miss Lilla cried a deal, Sir; and master was very cross; and I came in for my share of it too. I saw you in the hall, Sir, and thought I'd just chance it, and run across to tell you; for I'm not allowed to go with her, Sir. I wouldn't stand being talked to by Miss Dora Jane, and I've give warning; and I've brought you her address, Sir, written on paper, which I thought you'd like to 'ave."

She put a paper into my hand, and nodded knowingly and hurried away. I was taking out my purse to offer her something, but she would not wait. I do believe she had run her risk out of the uttermost good-nature and pure sympathy with what she regarded as a touching love-affair broken in upon by a cruel parent.

I carried the piece of paper mechanically in my hand a long way—until I had, in fact, got into Kensington Gardens, and reached the margin of the pond. I did not open and look at it then. What right had I to know any thing of the movements of Mr. Lyndon's daughter? I was not even her lover, as the good-natured girl who had left me evidently imagined. Why should I expose myself to the temptation of renewing an acquaintance which, for her sake and for the sake of honor and honesty, ought never to be reopened? The very bitterness of the anger and resentment I felt toward her father gave but another reason why I should not trust myself with any chance of revenging my own wounded pride by meanly tampering with his daughter's love.

"No," I said to myself, firmly, "I will not run this risk; I will not thus tempt myself and peril her happiness. I have resolved to save her from the futile vexation my acquaintance might bring on her; and I will not allow myself even the chance of breaking my resolve. In God's name, then—"

Without reading what was written on the paper, without even looking at the handwriting—I did not dare to trust myself—I tore the thing into a hundred minute fragments, and flung them on the face of the pool. The little waves tossed them, the little breezes played with them, some greedy wild-fowl gobbled up a few of them. I left the scraps that still floated to sink or decompose; no eye could read their secret.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CONSPIRATOR.

SALARIS and I gradually became close friends. Habitually we were both silent men, and there is no sociability like the free companionship of silent men. We often sat for hours together in my lodgings or in his, and smoked our cigars, and hardly exchanged, perhaps, in the course of the evening, a dozen sentences. Neither felt any need to talk unless when he had something to say; and therefore we much enjoyed each other's society. Ned Lambert was sometimes with us, and when with us, did not add much to our loquacity; for he had grown silent and moody enough, poor fellow, of late, his soul brooding over one purpose and one love.

Thus, therefore, we sometimes sat of an idle evening: three men smoking, and mostly silent; the Italian brooding over his new political schemes; Edward Lambert brooding over his love-affair, which was so tormenting in its incomplete, not hopeful, yet not quite hopeless, condition; I looking on at both, and liking both, and pitying them, and wishing I could help them, and in my heart acting as their confidant, but not speaking much aloud of the secrets of either. Ned Lambert and I had hardly ever spoken of his love-affair since his Lilla's departure. The promise she had exacted from me not to speak to him of her father made me anxious to avoid approaching the subject at all; and my own disastrous failure in attempting to set things to rights made me feel ashamed of the topic. Moreover, I had a clear conviction that the thing must come right in the end, and I looked on the separation of Ned and his love only as a mere probation, during which he must practice self-restraint and save money. So, if I sometimes pitied him, I often envied him as well.

But the case of Salaris was quite different. He was a man given up—so at least I thought—to a hopeless object. I looked on him as one destined to drag out a lingering life, hoping against hope, feeding upon air, wasting so much that might be noble and useful upon the empti-

est of all chimeras. His face was seamed with the deep lines of failure; you saw the ruin of plans and plots written on it as clearly as men crossing the desert can see the bones of dead camels in the sand. His life, past and present, seemed to lie before me openly as a panorama; the conspiracies discovered before they had been half matured, the sworn confederates who dispatched their daily reports to the police, the inane and empty projects, the hopeful and despairing journeys to and from London and Paris, with the eye of the Government quietly fixed upon the supposed *incognito* all the while; the tacit encouragement and half-spoken promises of diplomatists, which would turn out to be reeds to lean on, or spears to pierce, when the moment came; the over-impetuous friends, the cold friends, the false friends; the courage and self-devotion and soldierly manly qualities all flung away, the ruined life, the hollow cheeks, the prematurely gray hair, the broken heart.

Sometimes I thought, this man possesses all that I should once have asked to make me tranquil and happy. Had I been Christina's husband, I think I could have lived for her, and with her. He loves her only too deeply, he trusts in her wholly; why can he not be happy with her, and leave his feverish and idle schemes? Is it wholly because he has a lofty, absorbing sense of duty? or is it not, in part at least, because she does not love him, and he knows it, and can only make life endurable by the presence of continual excitement? I think so. I think he thirsts for a love she can not give, and he drinks political excitement as the thirsty seaman on the raft, when he can get no pure water, drinks from the salt waves, well knowing what must come of it—and goes mad.

I think Christina's ambition has gone far to destroy—at all events, to mar—three lives: her own, her husband's, and mine. Some day I will surely tell her so. Now I systematically avoided her, and she avoided me. The more I saw of her husband, the less I saw of her. It so happened that even on the stage just now we did not so often meet, for I had had the evil fortune about this time to contract a pretty severe cold and hoarseness, and my medical man bade me take rest and change of air. He recommended me to go to the south—Hastings or Brighton, or some such place. I detested these places; and it so happened that my Italian friend one night expressed a strong desire to see the English Lake country. I too had never seen it, and we agreed to go together. My physician had told me some southern place was the only spot I could go to under the circumstances; I knew, however, that all my voice and I wanted was rest, and rest was to be found deliciously in the shadow of the mountains. So we left town at a moment's notice, and traveled to Bowness, Salaris and I; and we had some quiet days on the Lakes.

One glorious day we were at Grasmere. We had been paddled across the lake to the mountain, Loughrigg I think, on the shore opposite the road from Ambleside. We had scrambled our way to a path called the Terrace Walk, which runs winding like an order-ribbon around the broad chest of the mountain. We flung ourselves on the ground, and looked silently at the scene below. The lake lay quite at our feet, a sapphire bedded in the emerald of the hills. The sun was already sinking, and his beams shot across our path. It was a glowing day: heat lay upon every thing. The water slept in the sun, and scarcely stirred a ripple; the grasses under our feet were motionless in the light. Tiny insects, which even in June were generally to be found nestling away from the cold air, crept out of their lurking-places to-day, and basked in the sunbeams. Two or three girls were sitting far below us, with their white feet plashing in the stream which ran into the lake. A boat, with a solitary oarsman, moved slowly across the surface of the pool, the rower merely keeping on his motion by a stroke of his paddles at intervals. Distant peaks and ranges of hills revealed themselves for the first time in the lucent sky; far-off waters gleamed among the mountains like sword-blades shining in the sun; the white pebbles on the strand seemed to suck in with delight the ripples which softly plashed upon them. A white cottage, with the sunlight on it, blazed like a pale meteor across the valley. Except the occasional voice of distant sheep, or the faint lapping of the water on the beach, or the twitter of the birds, or the laughter of the girls below, no sound disturbed the quiet of the scene.

We had been some moments without speaking. A bird suddenly rose above our heads with a shrill cry, and sailed away over Helm Crag. The sharp cry broke the spell of silence which had held us.

"This reminds me of Northern Italy," said Salaris, in his low, musical voice, with something always of a thrill in it. "I have been thinking of it this some time. The skies are as clear as over Como or Garda: it makes me melancholy. Nature is always melancholy, I think."

"I suppose it is; except to a painter, whose study it is, or to somebody who never thinks about it at all. I think sunlight is, on the whole, rather a sad thing to look at."

"So it is. So is music, to hear; so is any music at least that is worth hearing."

"Music is a passion of yours, Salaris, is it not?"

"It is not; it used to be. It only betrayed me, and I have cast it off."

"Betrayed you?"

"Disappointed me—deceived me. It is all illusion; you can not reach it. It is to the soul, in life, what the mirage is to the unfortunate wretch in the desert. I wish I had never known one note of music from another."

"And you an Italian!"

"The more reason. The arts have been the Circes of Italy. There is no music where there is political freedom, and where manly energy

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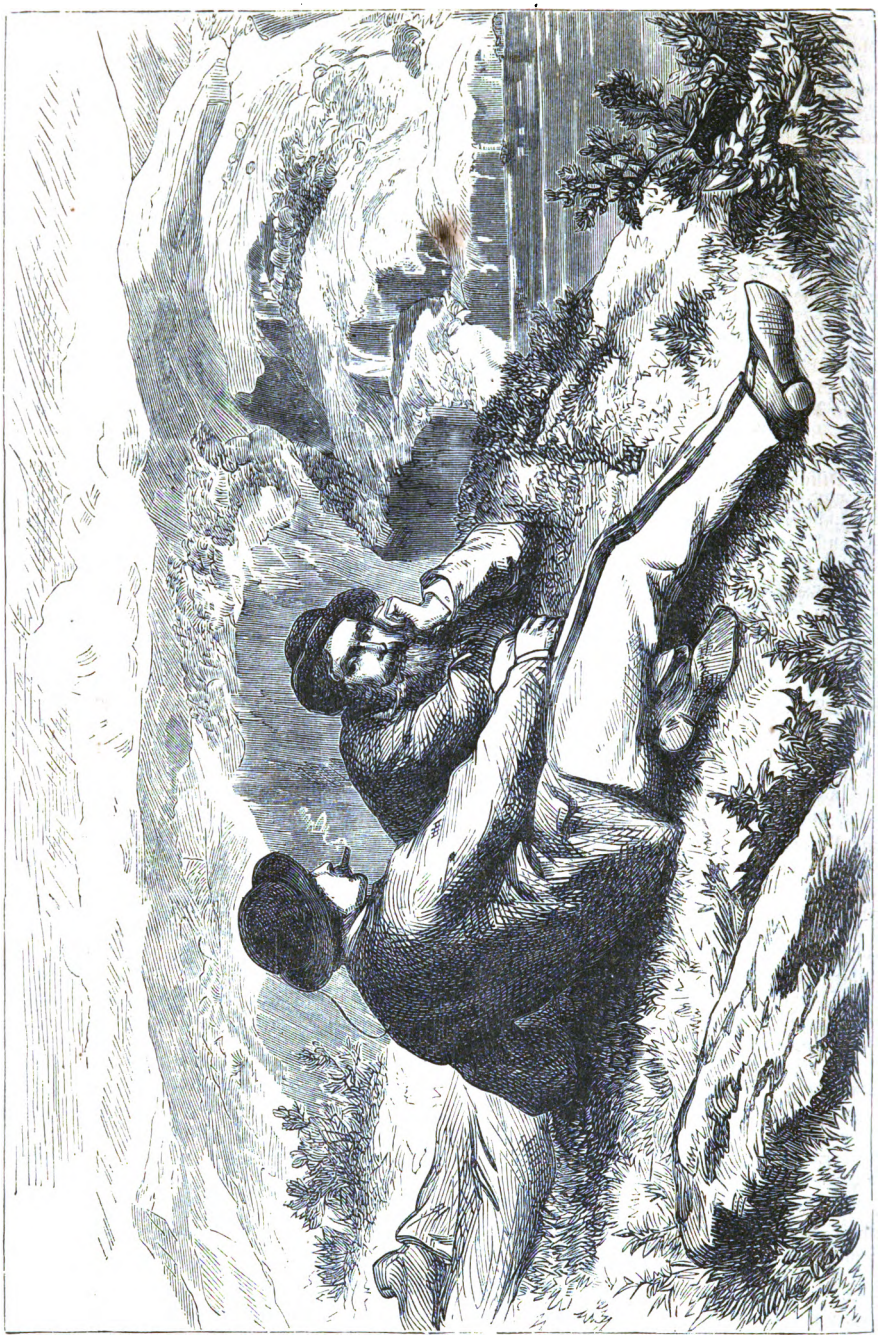

SALARIS AND I.

finds room. What music has England? what music has America? No; it is Italy, Germany—these are the places where people lie down and make songs. Italy is a slave tinkling her guitar to make merry her master's friends. No; I love not music any more; it has betrayed me—as well as my country."

There was a profound bitterness, as well as pathos, in the tones of his voice as he spoke thus. No one follows a mere abstraction, an impersonal idea, with such emphasis. I glanced at Salaris, and I thought I could read his heart.

I was anxious to lead him away to other thoughts; so I said:

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"But you have still hopes for Italy's independence?"

"Hopes? have I hopes of another world? I believe in the future of Italy just as I believe in God: when I despair of the one I shall disbelieve in the other."

"Well, I don't pretend to understand the question as an Italian might, or to look at it from an Italian point of view; but the prospect does not seem to me a hopeful one. Your Italians are not agreed upon any thing among themselves; they don't know what they would have; they have made up their minds to nothing."

"My good friend, when did a people on the eve of revolution know what they would have? Did all your English people know what they would have when they rose against Charles I.? Did the Americans all agree beforehand upon the object of their revolt against England? Did the Dutch make up their minds about what was to come before they attempted to expel the Spaniards? It is only the very few who lead the rest by whom any plan of action can be arranged; and even they, if they are wise, do not always try to know much beforehand. You are never master of the situation and the circumstances if you have planned all rigidly in advance. Revolutions are not to be set out beforehand, like pieces at the theatre. Let the thing once be set going, and leave the issue to Providence."

"Providence, they say, always sides with the strong."

"And we are strong, if we only would use our strength. Italians are kept down in great part by what you in England call a sham. Just now she has indeed one solid obstacle in her path; but that once removed her course ought to be clear."

"Well, I wish you every success, and I only wish I could bear a hand in your struggle. I might well do so; I have nothing to lose."

He looked at me intently.

"Nothing to lose in life?" he asked.

"Nothing."

"Not hope—not success—not love?"

"I have no hope; and—and I have got into a wrong groove."

"No way out of it?"

"No way—except over the precipice and down."

"I should like to enlist you in our cause, and I should have no scruple; but I have promised not to bring you with me in this."

"Promised whom?"

He set his teeth hard upon his cigar, and sent out two or three puffs so fierce and sharp that the smoke went straight from his lips horizontal as the path of a bullet, until the little breeze got power and dispersed it.

"I have promised my wife," he said.

He fell into a moment's silence. Then I resumed:

"You have some allies in England, though?"

The reader will remember that this was a year or two before Solferino, and when Italy had as yet few earnest British believers. To most of us honest Englishmen, despite Venice and Manin, Rome and Garibaldi, "Italian" still meant cowardly, treacherous, dagger-using, lazy, dirty, fawning, begging, lying, vacillating, popish, and slavish.

"Yes, we have some friends; not many."

"Mr. Lyndon is one?"

My companion smiled.

"Yes, he is one; and a generous friend."

"Does *he* know of any of your plans?"

"Some, if not all. There is something now in prospect of which he does not know."

"One question more let me ask you. Do you know his brother?"

"I know the man you mean, and I know now that he is Lyndon's brother. I only knew it lately; but the man himself is well known to me. We were friends long ago, and served each other."

"You don't trust *him*?"

"Why not?"

"Because he is a treacherous, selfish scoundrel."

"What words of energy! No; I don't think he is. He is unfortunate and heedless, and has had a stormy youth; but treacherous I do not think he is."

"But you do not meet him; you have not trusted him with any thing—lately, I mean?"

"I have lately employed his services a little; but you may rely that in no case should he have much of my confidence. He can be made useful, but he has not a head to be trusted. He can talk to Frenchmen like a Frenchman; to Italians, like an Italian; to Englishmen, like an Englishman. He can be made useful in a way, and in that way I use him, not farther. He is now in Paris. He came to me a few days ago, and showed me that he knew something—not much—of some projects. He offered his services, and told me he was poor. I once did like the man; and I have some old memories that are strong, that are superstitions with me. I accepted his services."

"Salaris, beware of that man! He will betray you."

"The Englishman suspects," said my companion, faintly smiling, "and the Italian does not! What a reverse of conditions! But have no fear; we trust our agents with knowledge only in their capacity of keeping it. He can do nothing. If I were to intrust *you*, I should put something in your power."

"Then do so. Let me be in the business, whatever it is. I have good nerves, and a pretty strong frame. I can use either rifle or sword. I can speak Italian; and I think I know, without teaching, how to die."

He shook his head.

"It would not do—yet. There are things only an Italian may do, even for Italy—things an Englishman must not share or even know of. I told you there is an obstacle to be removed first; that out of the way, the drar

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will begin. Then, if you *will* play a part, I grasp your hand. After all, you are at least Italy's foster-son. You are an artist and singer. You have sucked at Italy's bosom. You should give out a little blood in return for so much milk."

"Only try me, when the time comes. But the obstacle you spoke of—is it one that can be removed?"

"Ay, it can be, and it shall be."

"Before long?"

"Before many days, perhaps; before many weeks, so surely as I fling this stone into the lake below."

He flung a shining pebble far from the hill-side. No breath of air stirred as I looked somewhat languidly to see the stone shoot into the lake. But the brightness of the atmosphere had deceived him, and he thought the task easier than it was. The stone fell far short, and rattled into a cleft of the hill. Some wild birds rose screaming from their nests, and swept across the sky.

Salaris looked surprised, and even disconcerted, at the issue of the test he had offered.

"Come," I said, "were I a believer in auguries, I should endeavor to persuade you not to go on with your present undertaking, whatever it may be. The Powers are clearly against you. The stone did not reach the lake. Did you observe at which side the birds rose?"

"*Absit omen!*" replied my companion, with restored cheerfulness, and his usual smile of mingled melancholy and sweetness.

We sat still longer on the grass, thinking and smoking. My friend seldom indeed ceased to smoke under any circumstances; and the cigar had long been my nepenthe, my balm of hurt mind, my sovereign grace. Disappointments, vexations, humiliations, reverses, seemed to float away for the moment on the vapor: to go up like the prayers of the pious on the steam of the sacrifice.

The sun meanwhile was near, very near his setting; the place seemed more lovely than ever. More lonely and more lovely; the solitary boat had long since been moored under the shadow of Helm Crag; and the girls had plashed in the water until they were tired, and then dried their feet and put on their stockings and shoes, and went their merry way, wholly unconscious that far above their heads two pair of eyes watched, or might have watched, their doings. They too had gone away long since, and left my friend and myself apparently quite alone. Salaris lay flat on the turf, after a while, and seemed to have fallen asleep.

The skies were already purpling; and shadows were falling over the lake. It seemed to me vaguely as if the sound of the distant waterfalls grew louder and deeper in the evening air. In the growing twilight the scene began to lose its realities in my eyes, and to become transfigured into something more familiar, long unseen. I seemed to see again beneath me the bright bay of my childhood, with the headlands clasping like arms around it, and the gentle hills on whose sides I so often lay of evenings like this, and looked idly, as now, on the noble waters beneath. It was easy enough and pleasant enough to fancy, with half-shut eyes, that the scene I looked on was still the same. Yonder was the wood sloping down to the sea—the paths of it, as I well knew, thick with fallen leaves at all seasons, thick at some seasons with pine-cones and chestnuts; and there is the church-yard where my mother lies; and there is the path where Christina and I used to walk together. The sun goes down: he is gone; and the sunset-gun will be fired from the frigate in the bay.

And just at that moment a sharp, thrilling, peculiar whistle, seeming at first like the long scream of some mountain bird, rang through the evening air, and broke up my reverie.

My companion started to his feet, wide awake, and looked wildly around him. Far off, on the side of another hill, we saw the figure of a man. He was coming toward us, and he whistled again as before.

Salaris put one finger between his lips, and sent back a whistle so like that we had heard, that, but for its nearness and loudness, it might have seemed an echo.

"It is some one you know?" I asked, not a little bewildered.

"Yes," he replied, "some one I know; but I had not expected him now and here."

He hurried to meet the figure, which was now in the hollow just beneath. I followed at some little distance, allowing my friend to come well up with his visitor, and exchange words with him unheard. The man, as well as I could see him in the growing twilight, was an Italian, but of a different mould from Salaris. He was low, stout, with a thick black beard cut close round his face, so that his chin and jaws looked as if they were set in it; and he had a roving, restless, hungry, red-black eye, which rested suspiciously on me while I approached, like the eye of a fierce dog when, as he is devouring his food, he sees a stranger coming, and is not quite easy as to the stranger's intentions.

He had given Salaris a letter: and the latter, having read it carefully, spoke a little in a low tone with the messenger. Then Salaris called to me in a loud and cheerful voice:

"Our friend has had a rare search for me," he said. "He left London this morning, and is here now! He brings me some news which obliges me to return at once to town. There is no train to-night, unluckily, from here; but, by traveling on in a carriage all to-night, we shall get to Lancaster in time for the first train in the morning. I am sorry to break up our charming little sojourn; but there is reason."

"No unpleasant news, I hope?"

"Unpleasant?" He paused a moment, and seemed to weigh the word, and sighed. "No, not unpleasant; untimely, perhaps."

"Nothing rash; no madness, Salaris! Don't risk your life in idle attempts."

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"My life has no value to me except for these things; and an Italian exile's life is always a conspiracy. But don't be alarmed; caution shall be used in every thing: we have to economize life, I can tell you."

"Can I lend a hand?"

"No, no; it is not time," he said, with a smile, "to fight for Italy in the open field just yet. When it is, we enroll you. One thing you can do for me. I can only rush through London." Here he put his arm in mine, and drew me a little away, out of hearing of his companion. "When you return to town, see my wife alone, and tell her I have had to leave England hurriedly, and that she will not have tidings of me for some days. You need not cut short your stay here: she will not expect to hear from me for the time we were to be here. Needless to say, I never write to her through the post. Do you not write, but see her—see her alone."

He pressed my hand.

His companion had a carriage waiting on the road at the nearest point of access to the mountain. Salaris got in, and lit a fresh cigar. I did not accompany them; their way was not mine, and my companionship would doubtless have been embarrassing. I intruded no more inquiries or advice; indeed, I had no basis on which to rest inquiry or advice. I knew that Italian plots of various kinds had been going on for years; that emissaries were constantly traveling backward and forward between London and the Continent, with, so far as public observation was concerned, no apparent result whatever. I was therefore not much alarmed for Salaris. I felt rather, indeed, an unspeakable sense of pity for the enthusiast who was leaving me, and whom, as I did not then know, I was never to see again. He looked calm enough now, and cheerful; not at all like a conspirator, at least of the theatrical kind, with whom I was most familiar.

"Adieu," I called. "Beware of bringing on your head the anathema of Pio Nono."

He smiled cheerily, waved me a friendly farewell, and the carriage bore him away.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"AH, BEAR IN MIND THAT GARDEN WAS ENCHANTED."

Despite Salaris's hint that I need not cut short my stay among the Lakes, I determined to return to town at once. Somehow I felt that I could not remain mooning among these mountains to no purpose and alone. Of course I pretended to myself to be very sorry to have to leave Nature so soon, and insisted that an immediate return to town was simply a hard necessity not to be avoided; but in my soul I was glad to escape from a *tête-à-tête* with Nature. I dreaded her twilights and her long lonely shadows, as children dread the hour of dusk, when ghosts are supposed to lurk in all dim closets and dark corners. To some of us, too, Nature is not a quick consoler. She wants sympathy terribly. She is so beautiful and calm and good that we poor sinners can not hope to touch her heart at all. The exquisite beauty of the scenes around me just now, the purple shadows, the pure outlines, all seemed to form a sort of angelic society into which I had no business to enter—where, at all events, I had no right to remain. So, instead of lounging late among the mountains, I resolved to go straightway back to Bowness and the hotel, and to leave for London in the morning.

This was apparently a new instinct, an unreasoning, foolish, utterly unpoetic impulse; yet I have good cause to be thankful for my prosaic and timorous desertion of Nature; for the whole current of my life from that day might have been changed, an existence the most blank and hopeless might have been allotted to me, but for the sudden impulse which bade me leave the mountains and the tarns at once.

I turned, then, and set out to walk home. I even endeavored not to look much or often at the beauty of the scenes which surrounded me and which I was leaving. Sometimes, indeed, at a bend or sudden elevation of the path I was following, the resistless glory of lake and wood and mountain, steeped all in the rising purple of evening, would arrest my attention for a moment, like a sudden burst of light flashing on the eyes of one who has been groping and plodding a steady way in the darkness. But I was out of sympathy somehow with the scene. It was not like the sight of my rough and passionate old play-fellow the Sea, which, even in its softest, calmest moods, has nothing of the angelic and the heavenly about it, but is tossed, and fitful, and reckless, and ready for rude evil work, like any of ourselves, and never abashes or rebukes us by a cold, pure, changeless beauty. See, after all our raptures about her, how few of us can long endure the society of Nature! When any thing has gone wrong with us we are ready enough to run back to her; very much indeed as a young debauchee of prematurely broken health is seized with a longing to be once more nursed and watched by the tenderness of the mother whom he has left behind so long, and hardly thought of in the midnight hour of his revelry. Yes, when one is sick at heart; when his splendid soap-bubble has burst; when he has been rejected by the girl he would marry; when his play has been damned, his great part been hissed by the audience, and gibed at by the critics; when he believes he has ruined his constitution, and thinks himself under sentence of death—then he begins to find out that Nature never did betray the heart that loved her, and he crawls to her knees perhaps, and fancies himself becoming very pure and devoted in her refined companionship, and he admires himself and her with a mournful complacency. But he soon grows tired of her silent beauty and her undemonstrative sympathy; her face of loveliness

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and her heart of stone. He wearies very soon in any case, and goes away; while, only let the world, the flesh, or the devil, or all three combined, give him another chance, and then see what follows!—open to him any new and promising project in place of that which has collapsed; give him reason to believe that in his case, too, the nineteen nay-says of the maiden make one grant; let him feel returning strength and energy once again; tempt him with an opening for a new play or a new part—and observe how soon he renounces the charms of Nature, and rushes to the vehement interests and excitements of life once more. Delicious was the retreat which Gil Blas made for himself at Lirias, and calmly philosophical was the farewell to Spes et Fortuna which he inscribed over its portals. But the story does not end there. Yet another chapter, and we learn how promptly he quitted it for the treacherous court, and ran into the embraces of Spes et Fortuna once more.

Indeed, after a thorough drenching in the life of cities people do not seem to me fit for Nature's placid and pure companionship. We ought to be like the animal of which people say that once its fur has been soiled by contact with common clay, it goes back to its home no more. Nature avenges herself somehow, and will no longer put up with us. We have grown so that we can not do without the city life; we miss its very discomforts, as Albrecht Dürer, in the pathetic German story, missed even the ill-humors of his wife, and was glad to get home to her again.

So I resolved to quit Nature, and get back to Art.

It is but a short walk from Grasmere to Ambleside, and thence I meant to go in one of the steamers to Bowness, where our head-quarters were at one of the two or three big hotels which then looked out upon Windermere. I walked rather fast, and got over a good deal of the ground without stopping even to look round. As I drew near to Ambleside the road became studded with handsome villas and charming cottages. The gates of one villa stood invitingly open; the back of the house, which was seated in the midst of a considerable patch of lawn and shrubbery, was turned to me, its front looked on the lake. I could not see the water as I glanced in, but only the hills which I knew were lying on the other side. The hills were now of a deep dark purple, their outlines cut out sharp as steel against the violet of the sky, and over the shoulder of one of them rose in soft and melancholy beauty the silver disc of the Shepherd's Star.

I stopped before the gate and looked in, struck beyond resistance by the quiet witchery of the evening and the scene; and seized with a curious longing to get a glimpse of the lake, which if brought to view would complete the charm of the whole picture. So, as the gate stood hospitably open, and I knew that people are not very rigid toward strangers in the Lake-land, I ventured in a few paces, and took the path which led to the left of the house, assuming that that would in a moment bring me to see the water. All at once I was aware of a figure a few yards in front of me.

It was that of a slender young woman, who stood with her back to me, leaning one arm on the bough of a little tree, and holding a straw hat in her hand. From the position of her head I saw that she was looking at the sky; and the evening light, the scene, the grace of her figure, the sort of pensiveness expressed in her attitude, threw a poetic and melancholy charm around her. I felt as if I could almost see

> "The looks commercing with the skies,
> The rapt soul sitting in the eyes."

I could not help gazing for a moment; but I would have gone back, if possible, unobserved, as I had entered, only that, just at that instant, somebody came out of the house—somebody whom I could not see—and I heard a woman's voice call,

"Miss Lilla!"

I started at the name.

The girl who stood before me neither looked round nor answered; but a quiver of impatience went through her figure, and her shoulders moved with a slight shrug of vexation. Looking now more closely at her, I could not doubt her identity. Chance, or fate, or providence, or what you will, had brought me, utterly ignorant and blind as I was, to the very spot where Lilla Lyndon stood, and which I had deliberately refused to know of, when the chance was placed within my power.

Even then I would have gone away unseen if I could, if I had had time. But the voice again called—this time in a sort of supplicating tone, such as one employs toward a wayward child,

"Miss Lilla."

This time Lilla looked round; she did not see me at the first glance. The light, such as it was, just between the death of day and the birth of night, fell on her face. With its pale light against the growing shadow, that face looked like the evening-star itself, which shone above it; the face was now more than ever that of a young Madonna. Delicately formed, with clear outlines, a smooth, straight, white forehead, small straight nose, cheeks that now looked quite uncolored, dark eyebrows, and beneath them sad, clear, violet eyes. Lilla Lyndon's face was turned to me; and I could not move, even if I would.

Still she had not seen me; and she turned to where the person who called her must have been standing, and whom she evidently could see, although I could not; and I heard her say,

"I am here, Anne! What is it?"

"Miss Dora Jane, Miss Lilla, hopes you will come in now. It gets cold, she says; and she hopes you have your hat on."

"I am coming, Anne, in a few minutes; and

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it is not cold. I am coming, quite soon, tell Miss Dora Jane."

Miss Dora Jane's messenger vanished, I suppose; and then Lilla turning round, as if to resume her old position, looked directly where I was standing, and saw me.

First she seemed only startled and surprised, and she made a step forward as if to see who was the intruder. Then a sudden change came over her face and lighted in her eyes; and she put one hand to her breast, and held the other toward me; and then I sprang forward, only just in time to catch her as she was falling—for she fainted—and I caught her in my arms.

She was a light burden, although rather a tall girl. I could have carried her, if need were, like a child; but I only held her in my arms, and drew her to a garden seat which stood near, and placed her there reclining; and was bewildered, not knowing whether to go to the house and ask for help, or carry her there in my arms, or stay with her and let no one know.

Lilla remained only a moment unconscious. She opened her eyes and looked at me, first with an expression of wonder and alarm, and then with a glowing smile of childlike confidence and gladness. She passed her hand across her forehead and said:

"Oh, Mr. Temple, how much ashamed of myself I feel! Does any one know?"

"No one."

"Thank Heaven for that! I should hear such remonstrances and advice. I do not know why I became so weak in a moment. Was I long so?"

"Only an instant."

"Ah! What can have made me so? I think you frightened me. First I did not know who it was; then, I think, for a moment I thought it must be a ghost—this is a land of ghosts, you know. Why did you not speak? Why did you come in so strange a way? You quite alarmed me."

"You are better now, Miss Lyndon, are you not? You look quite pale still."

"Oh, I am quite well now—quite well. See, I can walk quite strongly. That was only the nonsense of a moment."

She stood up, and walked a few paces firmly enough, although she still was evidently a good deal agitated.

"Shall I go to the house and send some one?" I asked.

"Oh, please no; I don't want any one; they would only bore me. But now tell me, why did you come in that strange way, and alarm me?"

"I came in only by chance, Miss Lyndon; I did not even know that you were here. I walked in a few paces—I don't know why—and then I saw you, and had not time to go away."

"You did not come here, then, to see me?"

"No, Miss Lyndon; I did not even know that you were in this part of the country."

"I was here, and you did not know it; and your coming to this part of the country, and into this very place, was the effect of chance—pure chance?"

"Chance—pure chance."

"How strange!" she said, meditatively. "Such things would seem impossible. And yet—I must believe you."

"You may believe me."

"If I had gone into the house five minutes before, you would not have seen me?"

"No, Lilla."

"I have never heard of any thing so strange as that," she said again, rather as if speaking to herself than to me; "they would never believe it—never."

"They—who?"

"My step-sister and the rest. They never will believe it; but I can not help them, and I don't care. Let them say what they will."

"There is nothing to say, Lilla. I have seen you merely by chance, and for a moment. I am going away again. I leave this place by the first train to-morrow."

"That, too, they will not believe. I do not like unbelieving people; they suspect deceit, and so they create it every where. Deceit becomes encouraged where nothing else would be regarded as possible. This chance meeting, Mr. Temple, will be a reproach and a suspicion for long enough."

"I am very, very sorry, Miss Lyndon, and I wish I had not come."

"So do I. But it is done. Will you go now?"

"Yes, Lilla."

She gave me her hand; it trembled in mine; and I thought there were tears in her eyes. In answer to a sort of plaintive inquiry which spoke in them, I said,

"You wish me to go, Lilla—do you not?"

"I do—oh yes. I must wish you to go; but not in a cold and angry way; not as if you were offended with me. Not as if you thought that I, of my own accord, wanted you to go away."

"Oh no, Miss Lyndon."

"Why do you sometimes call me Lilla, and sometimes Miss Lyndon?"

"I don't know. I will call you Lilla always, if you wish."

"I do wish it. I wish that we should be friends, and speak to each other so."

"I never thought, Lilla, that you wished me away; I know you are always too kind and friendly. But I know too—I should have known even if you had not told me—that this chance meeting might expose you to reproaches which you don't deserve, nor I; and so I understand that you wish me away for that reason, and that you are in the right."

"Tell me, Mr. Temple, frankly—and forgive me beforehand for any pain it may cause, but tell me truly, and all, whether it causes pain or not to you or to me—why does papa not like you?"

"Indeed, Lilla, I can not tell you; I do not know."

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"But you must have some kind of idea; you must guess."

"I think it is because he knows that only the other day I was poor and humble. Not romantically poor, Lilla, but downright and wretchedly poor. Now he knows that I come from the poor, that all my friends were poor; I myself am not a man he cares to know; and I am by far the richest and the grandest personage of my whole race. I think he disliked me always for that reason. Is that frank?"

"It is. But I must go in. Now pray forgive me, and don't, oh don't, speak as if you were speaking to one who had herself any such ignoble feelings. You have told me that Madame Reichstein too was once poor, that her family and her people were poor?"

"Yes. Poor and humble—as my own. No words could be stronger."

"Yet papa always admires her, and delights in her company?"

"She is a woman; and beautiful and attractive; and—I think—"

"Yes, yes. Now go on, pray; don't stop."

"I think your father admires her."

"And I too," she said, looking at me with a flash of fire which I had not expected to see in her Madonna eyes; "I think so too, and Dora Jane is a fool not to see it. I know it. He admires her, he adores her; he would give her mamma's place if he could, and I must have no friend unless such as he pleases to give me! But I have a little of his own spirit, and I can not so be schooled any longer. I will not stay here any more. I hate the place—at least, not the place, but the way in which I am kept here. Mr. Temple, I am a prisoner here, and I can bear it no longer."

"Lilla, your father means it all for your welfare; even I, whom he does not like, must admit that. He has a right to guard you. You are young, and—don't be angry with me—beautiful and sweet and trustful, and you have no mother."

"Oh, I feel *that* bitterly, more and more every day. If I had a mother I could lay my head upon her breast and tell her all; and she would understand me, and forgive me when there was any thing to be forgiven, and not scold me in hard biting words. Mr. Temple, I have never until lately known what distrust was. I have believed every one. Lately I have been distrusted, and it has taught me to look at others with eyes of doubt: and I begin to find some of my idols are of clay. Look, they are broken, some of them! I understand now why girls in other countries go into convents, and live there and die there."

"You will outlive all this, Lilla, and be happy, and wonder that you ever could have had these sad and gloomy thoughts."

"Never, never! Nothing can give back the faith and confidence which are gone."

"New faith and confidence will grow up, and other ties will draw around you. Listen, Lilla, dear Lilla! I am so much older than you that I may talk to you as wisely and boldly as I think right. Do you trust me?"

"Indeed I do."

Her eyes looked a trustingness into mine which to win was worth having lived for.

"Then be advised by me. Be reconciled to your father. He may seem harsh now, and harshness is strange to you, and comes with the greater pain. But he thinks only of your good; it is his way of showing his love. Don't think of the fear you had—that about Madame Reichstein, I mean. Mr. Lyndon admires her—all lovers of music and genius do: but the rest is nothing; and what you feared is, I know, an impossibility. Be reconciled to your father; write to him frankly and lovingly, and tell him so. Tell him that you accept his conditions."

She hung her head a moment, and without looking up asked,

"Do *you* know the conditions?"

"I do; I think I do; at least, I guess them, dear. I may speak out openly to you, may I not, though you are only a girl, and I am a man not over-young? His conditions are, that you promise never to see me any more?"

In the faintest syllables she assented.

"Be advised by him, my dear. I would promise and pledge for you if I could."

"Do *you* advise me so?"

"I do, Lilla; I do indeed. For your own sake, my dear, I advise it. Do not become estranged from your father for my sake—I mean on my account; I am not worthy of such sacrifice; I am not worthy, Lilla dear, of you."

O God, if I were! If I could now but feel myself worthy of that child's pure and generous heart! If I could offer her a fresh, pure affection like her own! If I could but believe it in my power to make her happy! Never, never again will such a gift be within my reach! No man can hope for such a moment twice in his lifetime.

"You see I speak to you with a freedom and frankness which might offend you, if you were not so sweet and trusting and noble as you are. I will not affect to misunderstand you, Lilla; and you will understand me. I am not worthy of you, my dear; you would be thrown away on me and on my life."

"Your life has always seemed to me beautiful and poetical, and free from all the meanness and roughness of the common world."

"From the outside it seems so, Lilla. It is very hard and commonplace and mean and bitter within. I do not like it; and I am leaving it. I am leaving it to steep myself in the fresh life of the New World, and to lose myself there. You will become reconciled with your father, who loves you dearly, and you will forget all this, and be married some day, and be happy."

"Oh, how can you say such things! Oh, how can you! You are very, very cruel!"

She sat down on the gnarled oaken seat that stood near by, and covered her pale face with her white slender hands. Her whole figure

shook and heaved with emotion, and tears came trickling through her fingers.

Must I own that, up to this moment, I had always thought there was probably some truth in what Christina Reichstein had said, and that any feeling Lilla Lyndon might have had toward me was in part only a child's romantic sentiment toward a man who lived in a world strange to her, and which doubtless showed itself in her unskilled innocent eyes all poetry, wonder, and beauty? I was not prepared for the deep vehement burst of emotion and grief I now beheld. I was not even prepared to find that the sentiment, whatever it might be, had survived a short separation and silence. I was not prepared for love.

Could I doubt that I saw it now offered to me? Could I refuse it?—I who had wasted half a life in vain!

I could not; I would not. I sat by Lilla's side, and put my arm round her slender waist, and drew her to me. I would have done the same though her father stood by. She endeavored to draw herself away, but I held her while I spoke, and her hands yet covered her face.

"Since this is so, dearest Lilla, why should I try, even for your sake, to be wise and self-denying in vain? Since this is so, I do believe that Heaven has sent me here to see you, and to save you from a life which is too cold and hard for you. If I can make you happy I will, and I will at least give my life to the attempt. I accept humbly and thankfully what Heaven gives me. Will you love me, Lilla, and have me for your husband? I will love you always."

I heard no answer, and wanted to hear none. But she allowed me to draw her closely to me now, though her tears still fell as before. And then I raised her face from her hands and kissed her.

"Miss Lilla!"

The woman's voice again was heard at a little distance. She was evidently seeking for Lilla near where Lilla had been before. We had gradually straggled to a distance from that place, to quite a different part of the shrubbery.

"I must go," said Lilla; "they are looking for me again."

She now looked up for the first time for some moments, and her eyes met mine. They were full of tears, through which at last a smile struggled.

"You must go, dearest. Your eyes, I fear, are tell-tales."

"They will tell nothing more," she said, with a brighter gleam, "than they have often told lately."

"And I did not know of it!"

"Miss Lilla! Miss Lilla!"

"Good-by, dearest," I again said. "Secrecy for this once; only this once. We will act in the open face of day soon. I will write to your father to-morrow."

"To my father?"

She spoke tremulously, and looked affrighted almost.

"Yes, Lilla. To whom else?"

"But if—"

"We will talk of the 'ifs' hereafter. Just now, I think of no doubts. You shall hear from me, Lilla, soon, very soon. Good-by."

Again I kissed her. There was a flower in her bosom, and she took it silently out and gave it to me. Then she went quickly toward the house. She looked back a moment, and I saw her pale face once more—a star in the darkness. It set—she was gone.

I came into the road, and paced up and down there for a long time, trying to think, to arrange my ideas, to plan for our future. It looked difficult and complicated enough, but assuredly my heart did not misgive me; even on *her* account I could fear nothing. I could only think, "She loves me. I am sent to devote my life to her."

The flower she took from her bosom was a rose. Something like a shudder went through me as I looked upon it. An evil omen! When last a rose taken from a woman's breast was my possession, what was the story it predicted? Separation, disappointment, two, three lives thwarted and frustrated. And now again the symbol! Childish unmeaning folly to think of such things. But I could have wished that Lilla's flower were not a rose.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LILLA'S FLIGHT.

I DO not know how long I remained on the road outside Lilla's gate that night. I only know that it was dark, like midnight, before I thought of returning to Bowness. I have no way of expressing how I felt. My happiness was an unspeakable, an almost unbelievable ecstasy. I felt happy—and humbled, deeply humbled. To know that that pure, noble heart had given itself up to me was indeed something to fill me with a sense of my own miserable demerits. I could have knelt on the bare roadside, and prostrated myself, and prayed of Heaven to help me that I might be less unworthy.

Yesterday I should have wished to do some good or great thing which might win me a place of regard in her memory, and redeem my barren life, and then die. To-day my veins are filled with the ecstasy and glory of living for her.

I was resolved even more than ever to go to town at once. I would not make any effort to see Lilla again. I should be wholly unworthy of her if I did so. There shall be nothing more that has the least appearance of secrecy. I will ask her openly of her father; and should he refuse, as I know he will, we will marry in defiance of him. Come the worst, it is not long before she will be of age to decide for herself. And he—even he—shall learn that I have not been influenced by any hope or wish to get his

accursed money. No coin of his shall benefit me or mine.

After a sleepless, restless, happy night, I started by the first train from Windermere. I strained and twisted out of the window of the carriage until we had quite lost sight of the lake, in the futile hope of getting a glimpse somehow of the villa and the little demesne where I had found Lilla. I could not see the place, or, indeed, any thing near it. At last, I am ashamed to say, yielding to utter fatigue, I fell fast asleep, and slept in the carriage for hours.

It is a long journey from Lake-land to London. It was far into evening when I got to town, and I went almost at once to Jermyn Street to see Christina. I was disappointed, however, in my desire to see her alone, for she had several visitors with her when I called.

She looked surprised and even startled when I presented myself; but she compelled herself to receive me with external composure.

"I never expected to see you so soon," she said. "You must have grown tired of Nature even more quickly than I predicted."

"No," I replied, "I did not get tired of Nature; or, at least, that was not my reason for returning to town. But my companion" (I did not mention his name) "had to desert me, and I didn't care to stay among the mountains alone."

And I looked significantly at Christina.

"Afraid of being left to bleat alone, like Wordsworth's lamb on the mountain-side, the plaintive spirit of the solitude," interjected a young literary man present, who doubtless wanted to seem clever.

"Indeed? You were left alone? Then your fellow-traveler got tired of Nature first and left you?" asked Madame Reichstein, looking with anxious eyes.

"No, not that either; but some sudden call found him out even there among the mountains —he is such a dreadful fellow for sudden engagements—and he had to hurry away. He could not fix any time for his return, and so I followed his flight."

All this was said on both sides in the coolest and easiest tone—in that tone of semi-badinage which people generally adopt on nearly all subjects when indifferent ears are open to hear. But I knew that Christina was anxious and uneasy, and I only waited to get an opportunity of exchanging a quiet word or two with her to tell her all.

The opportunity was soon made. She drew herself away to a little table covered with books that stood in a corner, as if she were looking for something. I came to her side. She had just said, in an eager under-tone, "What is it, Emanuel?" and glanced up under her eyelashes to see that no one was too near, when I saw a change come over her face; and Mr. Lyndon, M.P., who had just then entered the room, approached her.

His eyebrows contracted when he saw me. She instantly left me, and hurried to meet him. He led her to a sofa with an air of lordly deference, which had something of a sultan's patronage about it; and they presently began to converse so earnestly that they seemed to forget all around them.

I was resolved to wait no longer. If Christina had already forgotten all about her husband, and her anxiety regarding his disappearance, any thing that I had to tell her could well afford to remain untold until some more convenient opportunity. I was quietly withdrawing, when, just as I passed near the sofa where Christina sat, an artist I knew, who happened to be one of the company, asked,

"Did you leave Windermere only this morning, Temple?"

Fire flashed under Mr. Lyndon's heavy eyebrows, and he almost started—he almost seemed as if about to break in upon our conversation. I noted the expression and manner, and I understood the meaning. The whilom pauper at Dives's gate was the dreaded lover of Dives's daughter.

I confess that I felt some respect for the self-constraint which enabled Mr. Lyndon to command his feelings in an instant, and to behave as if he had never heard my friend's innocent question. In a moment Lyndon and Christina were conversing as before; and I left them to converse. I had always hated to see this man near Christina, and I was pained not less than ever to see him there now. So I left the place, where he seemed determined to stay.

But I could not hate the man any more. There was a time, and that not long ago, when I thought it would have given me pleasure to humiliate and mortify him. I had no such feeling now. I made every allowance and excuse for him: I desired sincerely to be as considerate as possible toward him. I would have given much to be able to convince him of the integrity and the disinterestedness of my love for his daughter. I almost think I could have been induced, under proper encouragement, to beg his paternal blessing. In truth, my love for Lilla and my happiness in her love swallowed up all mean hates, and spites, and ignoble feelings of whatever kind within me. I was in fact almost in love with the world. The nearest approach to anger I felt toward any human creature was toward Christina Braun. Her reception of Lyndon, her eager welcome of him, her absorbed attention to his talk, seemed to me to bespeak a lamentable levity at a time when some crisis, which she appeared to think serious, was impending over her husband.

I walked home thinking over these things, angry with Christina, and sorry for her; and sometimes, indeed, full of deep, deep pity for her. It was ten o'clock when I reached home; and I opened one of my windows upon the blue twilight of early summer, and sat without a lamp and smoked a cigar, and began to see my way. I must write at once, this night, this moment, to Mr. Lyndon. I must anticipate any inquiry or discovery by him. He must know at once that no secrecy of any kind is in-

tended. From this moment it is certain that no power of man shall prevent me from making Lilla Lyndon my wife; and he shall know the full truth. No idle feeling of pride or mortified self-love shall restrain me from making every effort to avert discord and disunion. Nothing shall prevent my acting toward Lilla Lyndon's father as her love deserves that I should act. He could no longer offend me. I had lost the right to complain.

I lighted my lamp and wrote a letter. It was to him, and ran thus:

"SIR,—Not long since I endeavored to see you, and I was not successful. My object then was to pledge you my word as a man of honor that I would never place myself again in the way of meeting Miss Lilla Lyndon, or willingly be the cause of any disunion, however slight and passing, between her and you. I was not favored with an interview. You believed me guilty of conduct you had reason to resent. I do not deny it, or defend myself. The promise, however, which I could not make to you I made to myself, and I would have kept it.

"Chance—I am superstitious enough to think it Providence—ordered otherwise. I have just seen Miss Lyndon in Westmoreland. I declare that I had not the slightest idea that she was in that part of England. I declare too that I deliberately refused to know where she was, when I might (without knowledge or consent of hers) have learned it. Our meeting was as much a surprise to her as to me. This, however, I need not tell *you*. You know that she is incapable of deceit.

"I write now to ask you, as Lilla Lyndon's father, for your permission to me to become a suitor for her hand. I will not affect to doubt that this proposal will displease you. I say sincerely I am not surprised that you should have wished another husband for your daughter. But I say too that I am worthy of her thus far—that she has honored me frankly with her affection. For myself, I have but lately learned to the full how deep and devoted is my love for her. I stand amazed, and indeed humbled, by the thought of her affection for me—humbled because I have nothing to give in return.

"You are doubtless a rich man; your favorite daughter would in the ordinary course bring a fortune to her husband. Not so in my case. If Lilla Lyndon honors me with her love, and you give your consent, I receive her, and her alone. I will not consent to receive one penny's-worth of pecuniary advantage. Even you shall at least have no reason to suspect me of a mercenary motive. I can myself maintain my wife at least in comfort, though not in splendor; and I think Lilla Lyndon does not care for splendor.

"I wait your reply, and add nothing else. Nothing that I could say could honestly put my appeal in any better light to you. It should never have been made, did it only concern my own happiness. I make it believing that it also concerns the happiness of her whom I am sure you love.

"I have the honor to be
"Your obedient servant,
"EMANUEL TEMPLE.
"GEORGE STAMFORD LYNDON, Esq., M.P."

I had hardly finished this letter when I heard the rattle of wheels in the street, and presently my landlady herself came up and told me, with rather a significant twinkle in her eye, that a lady wished to speak to me very particular.

"Where is she?"

"I have shown her into the drawing-room. She said it didn't matter about her name, but she must see you."

I hastened to the drawing-room, and found Christina Reichstein standing there. Her veil was down, but I could see through it that her face was very pale, and that her eyes sparkled.

"Where is my husband, Emanuel?" she said, without any introductory word.

"I can not tell you, Christina. I have told you nearly all that I know. He left me, and bade me tell you that you should hear from him soon."

"Where did he leave you? Where was he going? Who came for him? When did he say he would return?"

"Christina, I am not deeply in his confidence. He did not tell me where he was going, nor did I ask any such question. He did say there was nothing to be alarmed at—immediately."

"Who came for him—Benoni?"

I described the emissary.

"Yes; Benoni. I thought so—I feared so; I hate that man."

"Is he not true?"

"True? Oh yes, too true. True to his wretched plots and plans. But there can be nothing to alarm me," she went on, reassuring herself. "I have not heard a syllable of any thing. Is it not very hot?"

I opened the window near her. She threw back her veil. She looked pale as a ghost.

"No; there can be nothing of any moment," she said, looking at me anxiously for confirmation of her hopes. "I believe —— is still in town, and has not heard of any thing?"

And she named an Italian name known of all men; a name identified with revolutionary movement for more than a quarter of a century.

"I can satisfy you as to his being in town, Christina. I passed him at Knightsbridge as I came along, not an hour ago. He was walking very quietly and slowly—quite unconcernedly, to all appearance."

"Then there can be nothing. It must be only some one of those ordinary journeyings."

"But don't people say," I asked, maliguantly, "that the Chief prefers stirring up rebellions with the long arm of the lever—that

he generally directs an Italian insurrection from a safe stand-point here in London?"

"People do say it, I believe," she replied, coldly, "who know nothing of him, and have no sympathy with his cause, or perhaps with any thing that is noble and high. You ought not to say it."

I felt a little ashamed and penitent.

"I am sure," I said, after a short pause, "that I heard Benoni, if it was he, speak to Salaris about the necessity of being in Paris at once."

"In Paris? Oh, come, this is the only important word you have let fall yet. In Paris? If you had only mentioned that before, I should have felt greatly relieved. It is nothing definite, then? It is only some organizing affair: to seek for aid, or advice, or friends, or something."

"Yes. I don't see how they can well fight for Italian liberty in Paris. Indeed, Madame Reichstein, I don't believe there is much cause for alarm. Perhaps the battle won't come off just yet: threatened governments live long."

"You are in a sneering humor, Emanuel, and I don't like to meet people in such humor; but I am a good deal relieved by what you tell me. And now, before I go, let me scold you for having left me this evening so hastily. Why did you not wait, and tell me all you knew?"

"In fact, I had nothing to tell; and you had other people with you."

"They all left very soon. You might have waited a little; I have no one to confide in but you."

"No one?"

"No one, now that my husband is away. I don't know why you look at me with such an expression; I think you ought to explain what you mean."

"Christina, I don't ask explanations, or offer any. *I* have nothing to explain."

"Yes, you have something," she replied, with energy. "You have to explain your manner to me—your suspicious manner, and your looks, which seem to insinuate something that I do not understand—that I will not understand."

"Ay, will not understand!" I said, with emphasis.

"Will not understand, then, if you like to have it so. What have I done that you, my oldest friend, look on me so coldly? Have I not now enough to distract and torment me without *that?* There is nothing I am ashamed of, although there is much I am sorry for. You are changed toward me; why—why?"

"Christina, I don't like your way of life; I tell you that frankly—indeed, you know it already. I don't like to see that man Lyndon hanging about you in the way he does—now too, when, for aught you and I can tell, your husband may be in some serious danger. I don't like to hear your name coupled with his in a way that—well, in the way that people do couple it."

Christina blushed, or flushed rather.

"My husband knows of Mr. Lyndon's visits. What right has any one else to—"

"No right, Christina. *I* claim no right. You insisted on knowing why I seemed surprised, or cold, or something of that kind; I have told you the reason."

"I didn't mean *you*, Emanuel; I meant the idle people whose babble and malignant trash you repeat—people who babble malignant trash about yourself, let me tell you, as well as about me. How do you know what things are being said of you and of me? How do you know what vile gossip may have reached my husband's ear—which *he* scorns to believe? Who can tell what people might say, if they knew, for example, that I have come in this way to visit you at night alone?"

There was much of her old winning way about this, which, coming as it did now, brought a vague, subtle sense of deceit to my mind.

"Come, Emanuel, dear old friend, have faith in me. Let there be one at least who thinks well of me—one *here* I mean—for my husband thinks well of me, better, far better than I could ever deserve of *him*. If you knew him well, and knew how he trusts me, you would not, and could not, believe me capable of deceiving him. He knows that Mr. Lyndon visits me; and he knows why. It is his doing altogether; that is all I can tell you now; but you shall know more before long. *He* is all confidence and trust. My dear friend, you and I are very good people in our way, but we are not like him."

She spoke now with a dash of sarcasm in her tone, and with a quivering lip.

"Christina, I do believe I have done you wrong."

She sprang up and caught my hand in a wild way.

"Yes, I do fully believe I have been suspecting you wrongfully. I don't pretend to account for what I have certainly observed—"

She smiled half maliciously.

"Although perhaps even now a conjecture does start up in my mind which seems to explain it—but I will not ask you for any explanation—"

"No, Emanuel. Believe me without asking for any explanation now."

"And I do. I am sorry for having wronged you; and I am more sorry still for the circumstances that have entangled you in what I can not help thinking a sort of humiliation; and which will end, I fear, in the wreck of your happiness."

"My happiness is wrecked, Emanuel! It went down long, long ago. I would give all to be young again, to begin again. The old immemorial vain regret! To be young again, Emanuel—to have the chance of beginning again, and doing something better! I sold my soul, and I have got a heap of fairy gold in exchange; and it has turned into withered old leaves."

My heart was deeply moved by the state of almost abject despair into which she had worked

herself. I endeavored to say something in the way of commonplace reassurance; but she cut me short impetuously, petulantly.

"Don't, Emanuel; I want no condolence. I dare say every thing is for the best, and all right, and all that: that sort of stuff never made any one feel any the happier. If I were to ask you, Don't I look pale, and wretched, and ugly, at this very moment? you would say something complimentary, I dare say. It would not reassure me. I have had compliments enough in my day, and they have done me much good! I have cried my eyes quite red, and my cheeks quite pale: mock tears on the stage, and real tears at home, make sad work of one's beauty, Emanuel. *You* find the world well enough, no doubt; you were always a patient, contented kind of being, and did not trouble yourself about any thing, as women do. Besides, you have special reason for happiness now. You have seen Lilla Lyndon."

"How do you know?"

"I heard, only an hour since, that she was in the Lake country; and I knew by your air of brightness and triumph, and—oh, something wholly unspeakable—that you had seen the little girl."

"Yes, I have seen her."

"And you will persevere, then; and you will not be warned; and you will take this child away from her father and her family? Oh, don't protest and look angry; she will go if you ask her; and you think you can break all the bonds of association thus, and yet find the woman you tear away from friends and family and habits happy in the end? You know nothing of women, Emanuel; you never did. She will plunge into any gulf with you now; she will awake with a shiver some day, and turn a pale face of silent reproach on you. I don't think the poor girl would scold."

"You are a prophet of evil omen, Christina."

"A screech-owl, am I not?"

"But I am not dismayed."

"You believe in this girl's firmness and constancy, and knowledge of her own mind?"

"I do, as fully as I believe in Heaven; far more fully, very likely. I know Lilla Lyndon; I don't know Heaven."

"You think the bonds of love will prove stronger with her than the bonds of habit?"

"I do."

Christina shrugged her shoulders; but returned to the charge.

"She lives now in Connaught Place?"

"She does."

"And you propose to live—?"

"In a small house in Brompton or Kensington, say."

"She has carriages and horses, grooms and maids without stint?"

"Yes; and it will try my resources, probably, to keep a miniature brougham, a couple of maids, and a boy in buttons. *Connu*, Christina. All that I know, and have thought of."

"And she will sit at home of nights and do crochet, while you sing at the Opera with some Finola?"

"No, Christina. I mean to give up the Opera—I am sick of it. Any thing I can do is better done in the concert-room. I will at all events try to make her happy, if she will have me."

"Happy—after she has quarreled with her father, and been discarded by him?"

"She will not quarrel with her father."

"Emanuel, you are out of your senses."

"No, Christina. I am coming to my senses—at last!"

I do not know why I made this reply. I suppose I was merely carried away by antagonism and her last words. She flushed as if she had been smitten on the cheek, and her bosom heaved up and down like little waves, and she indulged in her familiar action of throwing back that hair from her brow and shoulder. She turned away for a moment; and then laying her hand gently on my arm, she said in a softened tone:

"You do not think I wish you not to be happy?"

"Oh no, Christina!"

"Oh, do not, do not! I wish you to be happy, most sincerely. I only feared and doubted; but all that is nonsense. Indeed, I long to see you happy. I shall feel when I see it that my expiation is out, and my penance removed. I only feared that perhaps you did not know her, or she you. I suppose a woman always feels jealous of another who—I don't know really what I am saying! Emanuel, remember I was the first who told you Lilla Lyndon loved you! My dear, I read it in the child's eyes before she knew it herself. But *you*—you do love *her*—now?"

"Yes, Christina, I do. I know her now, and I love her."

"Then I hope and pray that you may be happy, and that the future may recompense for any waste of the past. I will pray for you, Emanuel, and for her. Do you know I am a Catholic now?"

"A Roman Catholic?"

"A Roman Catholic, if you will," she said, with a faint smile. "Yes, I have been so for some time. What would my brother and his pious Lutheran wife in Königsberg—you remember them, Emanuel?—say, if they knew? Yes, I sought peace; and I trust I have found it. You do not know—no man could know—how empty and blank my life has been. I have none of the true joys of life, and I shall never have. Other women, whatever their disappointments, have some comfort to cheer them, to look forward to, when they cease to be young; but I! Ah! a man can't know."

Yet I did know. I knew what she thought of, at least. What woman will not mourn over the quiver that is empty of arrows?

"Come," she said, "I must go. It is almost midnight; and this is a mad escapade. I am wasting my own time and yours."

As she rose to go her eyes glanced at the

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looking-glass, which, in the true style of a Brompton lodging, adorned my chimney-piece.

"Emanuel," she asked, quite seriously, "have I not greatly changed for the worse? But you won't tell me. And then—don't say any thing—so changed since I used to watch for you in the window every evening, long ago! Ah, those were pleasant days! I too shall soon leave the stage. I must in any case. I am resolved to go in my full prime of voice. We will go and live somewhere quietly in Switzerland, I think, if my poor Salaris can be persuaded to give up his dreams, and if he comes safely out of this present business. I don't well know what I shall do without the excitement of applause. It is a fearful thing for a woman who has nothing but excitement to live on. But I made my bed, and must lie on it."

"Christina, my dearest, earliest friend, it grieves my heart to see you so unhappy. Is there nothing that can be done? Do confide in me. Is there nothing?"

"Nothing, oh, nothing," she answered, with a sad wan smile. "I have now, oh, thank Heaven, a true and warm religion to fill my heart. Then, Emanuel, you forgive me all?"

"Dear Christina, what is there to forgive?"

"Yes, yes, there is. I left you for the sake of my own career and my own ambition. I went forth on my fool's errand and left you, and it was long before you recovered wholly, and—and ceased to think about me."

"It was indeed."

"But you are now free again, and happy, and hopeful; and all the past is sponged out, and I am forgiven?"

"Oh, surely, surely; if you will have it that I have any cause or right—"

"There, that will do. And we are friends?"

"Friends, Christina, forever."

She leaned toward me, and kissed me on the forehead.

"We may not meet again," she said, "except before many eyes; and besides," she added, with a wild, sweet smile, "it is no wrong now."

With that kiss of peace she left me; that was the funeral ceremony of a long, long, vain love now dead.

I went down with her to her brougham. Her German "familiar" was waiting for her, and they drove away.

She was, then, a Roman Catholic. I afterward learned that she had been formally so only a few months. I was not sorry for it. I was of no particular creed, and could never animate my mind, though in my blank and lonely years I often tried, into any warm interest in the differences of denominations, and the narrow theological questions on the solution of which so many good people are content to rest their hopes of heaven. I could never believe in the power of any faith to monopolize the right of granting passports into heaven. Many people, I often thought, seem to liken heaven practically to that famous cave in the "Arabian Nights," the doors of which opened at the utterance of a few cabalistic words, equally powerful in their operation whether he who pronounced them understood what he was saying, or comprehended no syllable of its meaning. But I was glad, somehow, to think of Christina kneeling at a Roman Catholic altar. She seemed the kind of being destined specially to be a Roman Catholic. Born to be sustained after every spring of impulse, passionate, warm-hearted, and yet in some sense egotistical and subjective; strong and bold in impulse, yet feeble in purpose, and especially lacking that steadfast, stony patience, which, indeed, is almost exclusively a man's quality—that proud, inexorable patience which, even in great natures, as Macaulay truly says, is often mistaken for the patience of stupidity; hers was a nature thoroughly suited to lean for support on the arm of a faith rich in consolations for every mood, in appliances to soothe every impatience and strengthen every weakness. I could easily understand how that heart, so passionate and loving, yet so fitful and ambitious, warmed toward a faith among the very ceremonials of whose ministry are sympathy and confidence and ready pardon. She, the disappointed wife, the childless mother, the ambitious artist who had won success and found it barren, what was left for her but such ready and sensuous consolations as are found in the religion of Rome?

At last I had begun to understand Christina Braun. I have written to little purpose if the reader does not already understand her. She was not the kind of being I had once imagined. Hers was not the clear, strong, self-reliant, self-contained soul I had once believed it. How, indeed, I now asked myself, could I ever have thought so? Did not a word, a mood, a chance decide almost every successive chapter of her life? Was not strength of sudden impulse shining in those dark and glittering eyes? was not instability of purpose shown in those fair, soft, tremulous outlines? Vivacity of emotion was indicated in the sensitive lips, weakness of purpose in that rounded cheek and chin. All those years she had been looking for happiness in many paths, and had not found it, because she gave up too soon each place of search and sought anew. She had always been seeking an object in our darkling life, but had never gazed long or steadfastly enough through the darkness in order that the way and the end might become clear to her. It was natural that she should take to the stage-life and to music—music, that most bewitching of delusions, that intoxication of the soul, in which a nature like hers would find all that the Oriental finds in his *haschez*. She had sold her soul to the unreal: they who do so soon find themselves but shadowless ghosts among the real.

Easy to understand how Christina Braun could believe herself accomplishing a high destiny when first enraptured by the success of a career where the honors follow so quickly on the victory that they are in fact its very echo.

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No success in life is so intoxicating as that of a great *prima donna*. Think of the patient author laboring for years at some work on which he stakes his fame and his happiness, and the fame never perhaps in his lifetime spreads beyond the appreciation of a few reviews and the admiration of one or two coteries. Think of the inventor wasting away his brains to make perfect some great scheme, which another man at the other end of the country may be all the while forestalling, or which may in the end only bring money to the capitalist who buys it, and whose name it is destined to bear. Think of the gray old soldier, whose terribly-earned honors only come in time to decorate his corpse. And then think of the successful singer adorned with the gifts of emperors, and greeted in turn with the plaudits of every civilized capital. Who in St. Petersburg cares for the great English *savant*? What London audience thrills at the entrance of the Italian poet? But the great singer goes from state to state, and is the idol and delight of every people she visits, and the fame which precedes and follows her is like the language of the music she interprets—cosmopolitan and universal.

But when all this has been tasted, and the delight exhales, what remains for the sated and sickened heart? The joy of the Art itself? Yes, if one has loved the art only, and for the art's sake; but what remains for one whose joy was only in the intoxication of the false emotions and the meretricious successes which the art can be made the instrument to procure? What earthly reality can sustain and nourish the nature which has lived in the delusion of music and the delusion of fame? I know of nothing. I thought it but natural that, awakened from those delusions, Christina should seek repose in that most fascinating and sublime of all delusions which exhales from the perfumed incense of the Church of Rome.

Thus I remained for some time, thinking over Christina and the change that had come upon her. For a long time, even before I knew it, the witchery of her influence over me had been fading. Her nature seemed to have been lowered somehow, and unidealized. Sometimes, indeed, the old influence awoke again, and her fascination, her ardor, her generous impulses quite conquered me; but if I had been given to self-analysis, I might have found that her influence over me was most powerful when I was not near her. When lately I still believed that I loved her, it was the memory of my own youth and hers that I truly loved. I believe that a man who has been badly wounded in a limb, and suffers great agony, and at last has the limb amputated, is long haunted by the echo of the pain, which he now can not really feel any more. And so it was with my feelings toward Christina Braun of late. They were the echo of a passionate love and a bitter agony.

I thought of her so sadly that, for the time, I almost forgot myself and what I had to do, and the letter that lay written on my desk.

I sealed my letter, and went with it myself to the post. Next evening I received the following answer:

"CONNAUGHT PLACE.

"SIR,—I do not stop to express any surprise at the nature of the proposal contained in your letter. I give it the reply which you appear to anticipate. I utterly decline to give my consent to your becoming a suitor to Miss Lilla Lyndon. I do not believe that such a course could possibly conduce to my daughter's happiness, of which I still consider myself the most competent judge, and of which, at all events, I am the natural and legal guardian.

"You are good enough to say that you would accept my daughter without any fortune. This offer probably seems to you magnanimous and romantic. It might possibly impress my daughter in the same way. She is still, as you know, very young. You will allow me, however, as a man of the world, to remark that such an offer, while very easily made, could in no case be followed by any result. Were I willing to accept your proposal to marry Miss Lilla Lyndon, you will, of course, perceive that common regard for her interest and her happiness would compel me to take care that she was provided with such means as I could contribute toward maintaining her in the station to which she has been accustomed.

"You will perhaps, for the future, see the propriety of withholding attentions which are in every way unwelcome, and of refraining from making proposals which can only meet with emphatic rejection.

"I have the honor to remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

"GEORGE STAMFORD LYNDON.

"EMANUEL TEMPLE, Esq."

I had expected nothing better. I was not surprised. I could not be angry. Having Lilla's love, I could afford to bear the cold rebuffs of Lilla's father. I was not discouraged. It would not in any case be long until Lilla came of age and could do as she pleased; and if her love for me could stand the test of that delay—as I now fully believed it could—no power on earth should prevent me from making her my wife.

I wrote to Lilla, telling her what I had done, and the purport of her father's answer, but softening as far as I could the tone and temper of it. I wrote full of love and confidence; bade her wait but a little, and all would be well; pledged her my earnest, unalterable affection, and my full faith in hers. In the conviction of her love I seemed to myself to move in an atmosphere of purple and rose-color.

Days and days passed away, and I received no answer. I grew restless, but hardly uneasy. She doubtless found it difficult to write; perhaps she was not willing even to pen a few clandestine lines, but preferred nobly and patiently to wait. I did not for a moment doubt of her love, or fear lest she might have repented, or

drawn back, or been talked into acquiescence with her father's wishes.

Suddenly I heard a rumor which startled me, and which gradually deepened into certainty.

Lilla Lyndon had been brought by her father from Westmoreland to his country seat in Leicestershire. The very first day of her removal there she left his house; she came to London by the train, and thence disappeared, no one could tell whither.

I had a stormy interview with Mr. Lyndon, who came, excited and furious, to my lodgings. I could tell him nothing; and I am bound to say he came rather to denounce me as the original cause of the disunion in his family than out of any suspicion that Lilla's flight had been concerted between her and me. He knew his daughter too well to suspect any thing of the kind. He could only suppose that she had fled to take refuge in the bosom of some wild and romantic school-friend, who would regard the whole thing as a delightful chapter of romance in real life. He had gone or written or sent to every one he could think of, and he was waiting in agony of expectancy to hear of her arrival somewhere.

Characteristically, he never thought of yielding to her love.

"I can not be civil to you, Sir," he said, as he left me. "There was happiness in my house until, in a cursed hour, you saw my foolish daughter. I will take good care when she comes back that you never see her again until she has recovered her senses."

"You have driven your daughter from your house," I answered, "and you know it in your heart. You can never change my feelings or hers."

"Then you still mean to pursue this foolish, romantic girl—this—this child, Sir?" he asked, with a scowl.

"Until Lilla Lyndon herself asks me to release her from such engagement as we have made," I said, "I shall never change."

Characteristically, too, he never thought of his poor relations in Paris. He had ransacked his brain not to omit one of the families and friends Lilla might have sought refuge with; but they were all West End people with country houses. His suspicions principally turned to two old school-fellows of Lilla's lately married; one in Scotland, one in Florence. Nay, he even thought of the maid who had lost her place for being too faithful to Lilla, and he had had her hunted up to no purpose. It was quite possible, he thought, that a romantic and headstrong young lady might take refuge in the family of a favorite servant. That would be like something in a novel, and, after all, would not be quite unladylike; the lady and the servant would still hold their relative places. It never occurred to him as possible that his daughter could condescend to fly for shelter and expose her family quarrels to a pair of poor relations who now taught a school and had lately let lodgings.

CHAPTER XXX.

A YEAR'S TRIAL.

I HAD thought of the poor relations very soon. Nothing seemed to me more probable than that Lilla, having resolved to leave her father's house, would go to the lately-found relatives to whom she had been kind, and who had known me, rather than to any of the friends of her father.

I was hardly surprised when, the very day after I had seen Mr. Lyndon, I received a letter addressed in a woman's hand which I knew—the hand of Lilla, the elder Lilla, Lyndon. This was what it contained:

"MY DEAR OLD EMANUEL,—Do you know whom we have got with us, sheltered here—a little dear white pigeon—not at all trembling or weak though, but full of pluck? My cousin Lilla. She is the sweetest girl I ever knew, and so fresh and green that I feel like her mother.

"Now *you* know why she is here. My uncle worried her to death with his pompous old nonsense. But you know that, after all, she must go back to him or come to some terms; and perhaps her plucky conduct this time may convince him that she is not a silly little child. I can tell you she has a spirit which rather amazed me.

"Well, I have written to her father; of course I must, you know. Mamma would have it so, and, indeed, I knew it must be done. But this goes to you by the same post. I made up my mind not to give the flinty-hearted parent any advantage that he is not entitled to; and if I were you, and you are really the true and firm Emanuel I knew, then I think you had better—I have confused this sentence, but no matter—come over here and *have it out with him.* She is worth making a fight for; and if I were a man, and such a girl were good enough to bestow a thought on me, I should like to see the father, mother, or grandmother that could get her away from me.

"I have written this in nonsensical style, but you won't mind. I am heart and soul with her and you.

"Always your friend, dear Emanuel,

"LILLA LYNDON."

Of course I crossed the Channel at once. There was, I found, a steamer for Dieppe from Newhaven leaving rather earlier than the Dover mail-boat. I chose it for two reasons: first, there was the less delay, and it was something to be on the move; next, there was the less chance of my finding myself a fellow-passenger of Mr. Lyndon.

When I got into Paris it was not yet seven o'clock in the morning. I went to one of the hotels in the Rue de Rivoli, bathed and dressed, and went through some attempt at breakfast, and then started to walk through the Champs Elysées and by the Elysée Palace to that part of the Faubourg St. Honoré where the Lyndons

lived. I calculated that I should reach it by nine o'clock, which seemed as early as I could possibly venture to present myself.

It was Sunday morning, and already the place was flooded with holiday-makers.

Somewhere by one of the great ministerial offices near the Rue Royale I felt a hand laid firmly on my arm, and looking round I saw the black, peering eyes of my hated acquaintance, Stephen Lyndon, fixed on me. He was dressed quite in French fashion, and looked thoroughly like a Frenchman.

What an interruption! What a delay!

At first I began to think that he really had gone mad; for he talked loudly in French to me, rejoiced to see me in town, asked when I had come back from Russia, and other such nonsense, meanwhile keeping his arm firmly in mine, and walking by my side with his head as high in air as he could manage to raise it. At last, when we got to a quiet spot in the Champs Elysées under a clump of trees, where by some chance there then was a deserted space around us, he dropped his jabber and began:

"So *you* are in this business too, you most deluded Temple! Go back again, if you have an ounce of brains in your head! Look here, Temple; I told you lately I had come rather to like you, that is, not absolutely to detest you. Now I give you the greatest possible proof of my friendship. I doubt if Damon would have done as much for Pythias—I do, on my soul! Leave Paris by the next train; and laugh at the fools who brought you here. They won't echo the laugh, I promise you."

"I don't know what you mean; and I am in no humor for foolery."

"Are you not? To see you here one would not think so. But the affectation of innocence is lost on me, Temple. Man, I know all about it; I know who are here; I know Goodboy is coming; I know they are duping him too, and not giving the old idiot the faintest notion of what they are at! But here he is, thank God! The *dies iræ* has come, Temple; and I shall give a few of my enemies something. But of all men else, I had avoided thee, Temple! How on earth they got you into this, or what possible use they thought they could make of you, I can't for the life of me imagine. But get back. *Vade retro!* Take my advice. I had always a genius for advising others. Leave Paris. Don't be found here to-night. A nod is as good as a wink, you know! Adieu; and remember, if you are concerned hereafter in writing my biography, that once in my life I did a good turn when I had positively nothing to gain by it!"

He withdrew his hand from my arm, became a Frenchman again, saluted me in Parisian style, and turned back in the direction whence he had come.

Another time I dare say I should have discerned quickly enough a gleam of meaning in his words. But now I was so glad to find I had really got rid of him without loss of time, and that he evidently knew nothing of what had brought me to Paris, that no other impression whatever was left upon my mind.

Not far from the Palace of the Elysée, in a little avenue running at right angles with the street of the Faubourg St. Honoré, was the old-fashioned house, with a small court, in which the lady who had entered into a sort of combination with Lilla Lyndon the elder kept her modest school for the education of French and English demoiselles. A carriage was at the door when I came up, and I assumed that Mr. Lyndon had forestalled me.

Yes, Mademoiselle Lyndon was at home, the concierge told me; and the bell for mademoiselle's apartment was rung.

In a moment my old friend came running down, looking very plump and healthy, her dark eyes sparkling with excitement.

"Oh, you dear old Emanuel!" exclaimed this impetuous young lady, and she kissed me twice before I had time to speak. "You are just in time! Haven't you been creating a pretty disturbance in a well-regulated family! Come on; no time to be lost."

She led me up stairs; then into a small dark room with floor gleaming in wax; then opened a pair of folding-doors which divided us from a larger room; led me into this, and announced, "Mr. Temple."

This room was brighter than the other, and had windows opening upon a little garden where there were vines. A sofa was near the window, and there Lilla Lyndon—my Lilla—was seated, looking pale and distressed, but very beautiful, and calm, and resolute.

She was dressed in some dark color, very plainly; she always dressed plainly, and looked for that very reason all the more remarkable in her beauty. The most careless glance must have seen that her face was of exquisite shape; that her complexion was singularly pure, transparent, colorless. Her habitual expression of something akin to melancholy gave the greater charm to the sudden flashes of bright happiness which were called up with ease by any gladsome thought or word, and which lighted her face like that of a joyous child. This moment, as I saw her first, she looked wholly sad. One of her hands held a vine leaf, which she had plucked from the stems that trailed in through the open window.

I saw in an instant her face pass through its most sudden and beautiful change. When I looked on her first her eyes were downcast, and she was, as I have said, all melancholy and pale. Her eyes flashed light on me when my name was spoken, and something like a color came into her cheek.

On a chair close to the sofa sat her father. He had had her other hand in his; he dropped it suddenly and sharply when I came in, and wheeled round to confront me, and his face flushed a deeper tint, and his teeth clicked together at the sight of me.

Standing at a little distance, and looking

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wretchedly alarmed and uncomfortable, was my old landlady, Mrs. Lyndon. I am bound to say that her expression of countenance seemed to ask me if I didn't think things were bad enough already, without thus coming to complicate them.

A mirror was over the chimney-piece straight before me, and in it I could see the face of the elder Lilla, who had introduced me. She looked quite delighted and triumphant. Her very curls spoke saucy triumph.

"Lilla," said her uncle, in his harsh, cold voice, "this is not fair; I did not expect this."

"Oh, Lilla, my dear! Good gracious!" murmured Mrs. Lyndon.

Meanwhile I crossed the room and approached my Lilla. Her father made a gesture as if he would interpose, but controlled himself. Lilla gave me her hand without speaking. I kissed it. Her eyes met mine fearlessly, and they told me of a generous confiding love, for one glance of which a man might be glad to die. When she gave her hand to me she dropped the vine leaf she had plucked. I took up the leaf and kept it.

All this, of course, occupied not an instant of time.

Then Mr. Lyndon addressed me.

"Mr. Temple, I certainly did not expect to see you here to-day. I do not see what right you had to come—no, pray excuse me for one moment. A man in my position might naturally and properly decline to see you, or permit your interference in any way, where you certainly have in fact no—well, no—ah—*locus standi*. But I have a great objection to scenes of all sorts in private life, and we are not now rehearsing *Lucia di Lammermoor;* therefore, to save argument and scenes, and all that, I consent to admit you for the time to this agreeable family conference. Well, then, Mr. Temple, I have come to take home my daughter. I suppose I have a right to do so? Have you, who honor me by showing such an interest in my affairs, any objection to urge?"

All this was said, of course, in a tone of cold grating sarcasm, intended to offend, and yet to stop short of being directly offensive. I was certainly not in the least likely to heed his tone or manner. Why should I? Had not Lilla's silent face told me enough?

"Yes, Mr. Lyndon, I have an objection to urge."

"Ha, indeed! I propose to take home my daughter, who is a minor; and you, who are an entire stranger, have an objection to urge. Hum, the objection?"

"That I am not certain whether Miss Lyndon is satisfied to go."

"I am not satisfied to go," Lilla said.

These were the first words she had spoken. They were pronounced in a low, sweet, melancholy tone.

Mr. Lyndon frowned and bit his lip. An explosion would evidently have relieved him immensely; but he seemed to have made up his mind not to explode.

"Why not, Lilla?" he asked. "You used to love your home."

"I never loved my home much, papa; but I loved you very much, and I do still, and I always will, if you will let me. But I have been very miserable lately, and I do not wish to go back on the conditions you have spoken of. I don't think we could be happy together. I know I could not be happy."

"What childish folly! Why can we not live as happily as before?"

"Oh, papa," she said, with a faint crimson now even on her forehead, and tears in her eyes, "I have told you already; I have told you many times; and here to-day, even before my aunt and my cousin, I will tell you again, if you like. I am not ashamed, no, not in the least; but you might spare me. You know the reason."

"In other words, Mr. Temple, my daughter admits that you have enticed her into a clandestine engagement."

"I do not, papa; I could not admit any thing of the kind, for it would not be true. There is no clandestine engagement. Mr. Temple has never enticed me into any thing. He has held back from me, he has avoided me, like a man of honor, like a gentleman. But you ask me to promise never to see him again. I will not promise that; I can not promise it."

"*He* offered to promise as much the other day," Mr. Lyndon said. "*He* offered it, for his part."

"I did, Mr. Lyndon, because I was willing to make any sacrifice whatever of my own feelings for Miss Lyndon's sake. I would have done any thing, promised any thing, and kept my promise, that you and she might not be brought into disunion through me. But I did not then know—Oh, forgive me, Lilla, if I speak too plainly—I did not then feel sure that your daughter's feelings toward me were as deep and lasting as I now believe they are. Providence threw us together, and I learned my own happiness. I will not give it up for any consideration upon earth. Miss Lyndon honors me with her affection; that gives me a claim and a right beyond any thing any other living being can have. No power under heaven shall induce me to resign it."

Mr. Lyndon's eyes flashed fire. I must say that all this time he was a marvel of self-control and of good-breeding—good-breeding covering a bitter anger.

"Mr. Temple, I believe you consider that you owe me some ill-will for having slighted you once or twice. If that is so, even you must admit that you see me in a position of sufficient humiliation, brought about by your means, to atone for all wrongs. Now let me speak plainly to you, and let this extraordinary conference, which I certainly never invited, have some practical conclusion. You come here, I as-

sume, to offer yourself as a husband for my daughter?"

I bowed my head.

"Then, so far as I am concerned, I absolutely, and for the second—I hope the last—time, refuse my consent. If my daughter chooses you, she loses me."

"Oh, uncle, for shame!" broke in the elder Lilla.

"Lilla, my dear! Lilla, my own child!" remonstrated her mother.

"Stuff, mamma! it *is* a shame."

Mr. Lyndon looked at her silently for a moment. I am compelled to say that his niece in no way flinched. He turned away, giving her up apparently as hopeless, and went on:

"Now that is my decision; and I distinctly say it is not to be altered. Of course I can not control my daughter's actions after she comes of age; and in real life the days of coercing young women and locking them up in towers have passed away. My daughter must choose. I don't know whether Mr. Temple considers it the best way of proving his chivalrous affection for my daughter to induce her to separate herself from her family, and give up her father and her place in society."

"Papa, I have told you that Mr. Temple never did endeavor to induce me. I endeavored to induce him. He kept back because he was only too considerate for me. Please don't pain me uselessly by speaking in such a manner of him: it pains me; and indeed, indeed it is useless; it can not change me."

"My daughter thinks more of Mr. Temple's feelings than she does of her father's."

"No, papa. Mr. Temple has never said a word of you which was unkind. It is ungenerous of you to speak so of him. You know he will not resent it, or defend himself."

Lyndon looked at his daughter with eyes of positive wonder. Such demonstrations on her part were perfectly new to him. I thought there was, with all his anger, a certain expression of admiration in his face. He leaned his chin upon his hands, and his hands upon the head of his cane, and looked at her quietly, contemplatively.

"Lilla, my dear," he said, after a moment's pause, "you are a generous child. Before you decide, you ought at least to know all. You are not, I believe, the first of our family whom Mr. Temple has honored with his affection: you are not even the first Lilla Lyndon."

Lilla turned her eyes on me with an expression which only seemed to say, "This is a mistake, is it not?" I think my looks replied.

"I believe Mr. Temple was once engaged to my niece yonder?"

"Never, uncle; never in his life," calmly replied Lilla the elder. "Mr. Temple never spoke a word of love to me, nor I to him. He was no more engaged to me than to mamma."

"Oh, Lilly dear!" interposed her mother, shocked at the apparent levity of the comparison.

"But you gave me to understand—you did yourself—" said Lyndon, wheeling round and sternly confronting his niece.

"A pious fraud, uncle," replied the young lady, quite unabashed. "And not so much of a fraud either, for it was rather implied than expressed."

"A deceit, then, was practiced on me—for what purpose?"

"A sort of deceit; but Mr. Temple had nothing to do with it; never heard of it until it was done, and then was horribly ashamed and amazed. I had no reason to be flattered, I can tell you; and I was very sorry for it, because the purpose—a stupid idea of mine, uncle, to get your interest and influence—wholly failed. I had my shame for my pains, that's all."

"Perhaps it was also by some delusion or deception of the kind that I have been led to believe Mr. Temple was engaged to another lady at one time—a lady whom I know—a lady, in fact, who belongs to his own profession." Mr. Lyndon was now growing very intense in his manner, and he kept his lips closely together. "I don't care to mention the lady's name; but Mr. Temple will hardly say he does not know whom I mean."

"I know perfectly well, Mr. Lyndon."

"I believe I am not wrong in saying that you endeavored to induce that lady to marry you?"

"You are not wrong."

A flush of triumph came into Mr. Lyndon's face, and he looked eagerly round at his daughter. She had been listening with an expression of quiet, confident, half-smiling contempt to all this cross-examination, and when the final question came she glanced up toward me as before. When I gave my answer the color rushed to her cheeks, and a hurt and startled expression came over her. She half rose from the sofa, and an exclamation of surprise and pain broke from her.

"*Habet!*" observed Mr. Lyndon, in a quiet under-tone.

Lilla the elder raised her eyebrows in wonder.

"You are not wrong, Mr. Lyndon," I said quite calmly; and then I turned to his daughter. "Listen, Lilla; you have a right to a full explanation, and there is nothing for me to be ashamed of, or for you to condemn. If there was, I should not now be here. Lilla, some dozen years ago, when I was hardly more than a boy, I loved the woman your father speaks of. She was then a poor girl; I loved her dearly; we thought to have been married; but we were both poor, and she looked for some brighter career than I could give her; and I don't blame her. She left me, and for ten years I never even saw her. I loved her passionately all that time; I wasted the remainder of my youth and much of my manhood in fruitless love for her. When at last we met again she was married. I think, or I then thought, that I loved her still—at least I loved her memory.

I saw you, Lilla—and I came to know, not all at once, but gradually and surely, that I loved her no more. I loved *you*. That is the whole story, as true as light. Twelve years ago, when you were a little child, I loved that woman. She is still my dear friend, and always, please God, shall be. I love you now better than all the world—better than memory, or youth, or hope, or, I believe, than Heaven!"

Tears were in Lilla's eyes. She made no answer, but quietly, confidently put her small white tender hand in mine, and with the lightest, faintest, dearest pressure of faith and affection told me I was believed and loved.

Mr. Lyndon's shot had wholly missed; in fact his piece had burst, and wounded him with the splinters. He soon recovered himself, however, and he never failed to remember that he was a gentleman.

"Well," he said, "I am sure there is nothing to Mr. Temple's discredit in what he has told us. He has no reason apparently to complain of my having brought out this explanation. He will of course understand my natural anxiety to see that, if my daughter chooses to make what I consider an utterly unsuitable marriage, it is at least with somebody whose protestations of affection are likely to be sincere. I think, however, we have had quite enough of discussion now, and had better bring this very singular conference to an end. I have made up my mind, and have mentioned my decision. From that I shall not depart. If my daughter chooses you, Mr. Temple, she has done with me. That being so, I ask you, Sir, what you propose to do?"

"First, to speak for a few minutes with Miss Lyndon alone."

"That you shall not, by God!" exclaimed Mr. Lyndon, losing for the first time his self-control and the hard iciness of his manner. "Never, while she is under any control of mine. Too much of that already; but for that, we never should have been brought to this outrageous state of things. No, Sir, if you have any thing to say to my daughter, it must be said in her father's presence, or not at all. She is still my daughter."

"Then in your presence, Mr. Lyndon, if you please. I desire to take no advantage even of you; you shall hear every word."

He frowned and assented.

Lilla the elder and her mother quietly left the room and closed the folding-doors behind them. Mr. Lyndon stood up; his daughter remained seated on the sofa, pale still, with tears in her eyes, but undismayed.

"Now, Sir," Mr. Lyndon said, harshly, "say what you will; and to the point, please."

He took out his watch and glanced at it.

I sat beside Lilla and took her hand. He chafed, and looked for an instant as if he would have interfered; but he again controlled himself, and shrugged his shoulders as one who would say, "Better let this fooling have its way; it must finish soon."

"Lilla my dearest—Lilla my love," I said, "you have heard your father's decision; he says he will not change."

She looked up with a faint sad smile, and said in a low firm voice:

"Nor I, unless you bid me."

"That I never, never will; but I will not allow you to sacrifice yourself for me—for it will be a sacrifice, Lilla—without full and long consideration. You are very young, dearest; you are only twenty years old—to me almost a child—you do not perhaps even yet know what you are doing. Your father loves you, even now when he seems most angry with you. Let us think of him too; go back with your father, my love."

She started, and so did he.

"Oh, don't think I ask you to give me up; I am not capable of such a sacrifice. But I do ask you, Lilla, to wait; to go home with your father, to be his daughter again until you are of age and can rightfully decide for yourself. Live with him, and do not even see me in the mean time, if he exacts that condition. Dear Lilla, it will be a bitter condition to me to fulfill, if he demands it; but I will fulfill it, and you will be guided by me, and fulfill it too. And then when that time is out, I will come to you openly, and under your father's eyes, if he will, and ask you to be my wife; and if you are still of the same mind as now, I will accept your sacrifice without scruple, and recognize no right under heaven to interpose between you and me. Let us do this, my dearest, and I shall then have no fear that I have taken advantage of the tenderness of a young heart, and beguiled you into a sacrifice."

Lilla's hand clung to mine all the closer. Her father said:

"Mr. Temple, I can not help saying that your proposal seems that of a man of honor, and—and, in fact, of a—of a—gentleman. I do not attempt to induce my daughter to accept it; I fear my influence now would be of little avail. It is only fair to you to say that there is not the slightest chance of my views with regard to your proposal undergoing any change in the mean time. But I promise you that no pressure shall be brought to bear upon Lilla, either by me or my other daughters, to distress her in any way. The subject shall, if she wishes, never be alluded to. I would ask you, perhaps, in the interval, occasionally to honor me with your company at my house; yet, all things considered—"

"Spare yourself any such consideration, Mr. Lyndon; I could not accept your invitation."

Then I turned to Lilla and pleaded my arguments against myself, against my own heart, once more. Heaven knows what it cost me to plead for that year of separation and silence. Heaven knows the agony of the pang that occasionally shot through me as I thought of the possibility that a year of severance might change the heart of even a girl so loving and noble as Lilla, who, after all, was yet in the

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light sunshine of her twentieth summer. But I ordered my soul and hers to bear it. Believing that for her sake—for her, who was so young and trustful and innocent—it was but right and just, I stamped my selfish emotions under my feet, and pleaded for my own sentence of banishment.

Mr. Lyndon meanwhile looked on with a queer, puzzled, half-humorous expression. I believe in his heart he thought for a while that I was trying a mere *coup de théâtre*, making a grand display of self-sacrifice, in the hope that he might start up, as the father in a well-constructed domestic drama would naturally be expected to do, declare that he was not to be conquered in generosity, and place his daughter's hand in mine. He was, as I have already mentioned, a quiet, interested, admiring student of the selfishnesses and frauds of human nature. He studied them and delighted in them as a naturalist does in watching the habits of some kind of insect; and he believed he had discovered the secret spring of all the impulses of man and woman. I had reason to know that the very women at whose skirts he ostentatiously hung, and on whom he spent his money, he thus studied as if they were rabbits or bees, and smiled to himself whenever he found, or thought he found, some new little meanness. He therefore listened with an expression of whimsical interest while I pleaded with Lilla, and the corner of his mouth played with a quiet humor, as if he smiled in anticipation over the certain failure of this my melodramatic artifice. I saw the look, I understood it, and I despised him.

"Now then, Lilla," he said at last, "your decision, my dear?"

"*I* know it already," I said.

"I will go with papa," Lilla murmured.

Mr. Lyndon smiled a triumphant smile.

"And I will do as you tell me, Emanuel, because I believe in you, and because you ask me in the name of your own feelings and your own sense of honor. You shall be satisfied that I have not acted like a child. Let us wait; it will not be very long, and then we can have nothing to repent. You will not change, Emanuel."

"No, by Heaven—not I!"

"And for me—if you doubt me—oh, wait and see. You have talked of a sacrifice. This is the sacrifice, and I agree to it for your sake. Papa, you have not understood Mr. Temple. If he were to ask me this moment—yes, this moment—I would leave all on earth to go to him and be his wife, and be happy, or suffer, or die with him. He asks me to wait; and I do so for his sake, and because he asks me, and I too wish to show and prove to all the world that he is what *I* know him to be. For a year, then, Emanuel, good-by. Let us not see each other any more until that time, that long time, is out. Then come to me. You will find me unchanged—or dead. Papa, you lose your daughter either way."

She was rising with a proud, firm air. But her soul was stronger than her frame, and she pressed her hand to her forehead, gave a deep-drawn sigh, and fainted.

I caught her and held her in my arms. Her father made a step forward; but I peremptorily signed to him to keep back. I would, if needs were, at that moment have held him back with one arm, while I sustained her with the other. Then, after one long, sad, delightful, maddening moment, during which I kissed her lips, her cheek, her forehead, her eyes, I laid her softly on the pillow of the sofa, whereon she had been about to fall when I caught her; and I said to Mr. Lyndon:

"She will revive in a moment: and she will go with you, Sir. Be kind to her."

"Damn it, Sir!" he said, angrily; "I know how to take care of my own daughter. She always loved me and obeyed me until now."

So I left the father and the daughter.

I glanced back as I passed through the folding-doors, and saw that he was bending tenderly over her, and touching her hair with hands that trembled and looked hot; and I do believe that I saw a tear fall from his eyes. The cynical student of human nature had found out a new weakness—in himself! Make him laugh at that!

CHAPTER XXXI.

DANGER-SIGNALS.

An hour after, I was walking alone through one of the alleys of the Champs Elysées.

I had waited but a few moments with Mrs. Lyndon and her daughter, long enough to hear that things were going rather prosperously with them; that Mrs. Lyndon hated Paris, and the Parisian way of cutting steaks and chops and joints; that they had sometimes seen Ned Lambert, "as a friend," Lilla said; and that he was still constant, patient, hopeful. I was glad to learn that Lilla knew nothing of her father's whereabouts—her father, whom I had seen that morning within a quarter of a mile of her house!—and I put in many words for Ned Lambert, and against her resolution of delay. She shook her head sadly, but decisively.

"*You* have to wait," she said; "why not we? If a woman is worth having, Emanuel, she is worth waiting for. I will never marry, never, while that wretched man lives, or until I know that he is reclaimed, and decent enough, at all events, not to bring open shame on my husband. If Edward Lambert is like me, he will wait. If not, Emanuel, then would it not be better we never became any thing more to each other?"

"Ned will wait, never fear."

"Oh yes, Ned will wait"—and a tear flashed up in her bright eye. "There never was a heart more true and tender than his—dear old Ned, dear old Ned!"

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My poor friend's own heart had greatly expanded since I first saw her. She was a sadder and a more loving woman now than I had ever known her. My pretty pagan was becoming thoroughly Christianized. The soul was entering the body of the hardly-entreated, world-seared Undine of the Thames.

Thinking over this, even amidst the bewildering pressure of my own thoughts, I walked slowly through the Champs Elysées. I was to leave Paris that night; to travel again by Dieppe, lest I should obtrude myself on Mr. Lyndon; and I had yet some weary hours to while away.

Despite my parting from Lilla—despite the year of probation, fraught with such various possibilities, that lay before me—the pervading sensation of my soul was made up of pride and happiness. I had something to love, I had something to live for—I was loved. Out of the dullness and arid darkness of my commonplace purposeless existence a light of heaven had come down to me. I had no longer any doubt of the depth of Lilla Lyndon's affection. I believed without shadow of distrust in the immortal strength of her love, and I seemed as if henceforth I walked with a pillar of light to guide my way. Wait for a year!—why, I had waited for ten years and more, in vain, and I would have accounted it no sacrifice, if the time had but accomplished the object. If the younger love for Christina had been more feverish and burning, it had never had the deep sweet abiding faith I felt in the soul and the affection of Lilla Lyndon. The first glance she ever turned on me was like a ray of sacred moonlight to one who has lain down wearied in a sandy desert. In her I found the woman who is all truth and simplicity; who has character, but no self. How such a being ever came to love me, I never could understand—I can not now understand; but it always seemed to me that her love was a consecration which pledged me to all good and generous impulses, and bade selfishness, and evil passion, and distrust, be gone forever. A year—only a year! and the deep faith and sanctity and heavenly guardianship of her love the while. A year—and, after all, I am yet young! it shall be a year of earnest work and improvement, and preparation for the future, which now at last looks so clear and bright.

Prose in life always mingles with our poetry. I was already turning over practical plans for our future; plans into which questions of income largely entered. I had a year to work in, and during that interval I hoped to make a little money, and then to give up the stage. In every way the concert-room suited me better and pleased me better; and I thought I could thus lead a far quieter and happier life with Lilla.

Thinking over these things, I sauntered through the Camps Elysées, where now it became hardly possible to find a quiet spot. The Sunday-enjoying people were all out; the men with their wives, and mothers, and little children, the husbands generally attending more to the children than the wives did; the *ouvrier* and his *amie;* the *voitures de remise* full of pleasant parties going off to the Bois—although the Bois of the year I speak of was very different indeed from that of 1869; the soldiers lounging and smoking; the queer riders looking so very much as if they had hired their horses for the first time that very day, and did not well know what to do with them.

I sat at a table of one of the open *cafés* and looked at the scene. I was thirsty, and ordered some wine; drank it, and smoked a cigar, and fell thinking.

A man passed by once or twice, and surveyed me curiously. At last he came and took a seat at a table near me, and still eyed me attentively. I knew he was looking at me, even when I did not see him; so I looked up at last, and studied his features. Yes, I must know him; I had certainly seen him before somewhere.

But where?

He was evidently an Italian or Spaniard—an Italian more likely. He was low and stout, with a thick black beard cut closely round his face, and he had a strange restless, suspicious, burning, wolf-like eye, unpleasant to see, although the general expression of his face was otherwise honest and manly enough.

Yes, I know that man; at least I have seen him before; that is not a man to quarrel with; that is a man to do any thing. For a certain class of conspirator, now—

Ah! there it is! that is the man! The envoy who found Salaris in Westmoreland, and took him away!

Then there came a very rush of half-forgotten things to my mind. My own concerns had made me forget them. The words which Stephen Lyndon had spoken to me this morning: his wild vague talk of something going on which he meant to disclose; his advice to me to leave Paris this very night! And Salaris is in Paris; and this man, who brought him, happens to be at my very elbow. And Lyndon had been intrusted with some of their secrets!

In a moment the reality of the whole situation seemed to reveal itself to me. Whatever the plot Salaris had now in hand, Stephen Lyndon had betrayed it to the French Government, and its eyes were on the conspirators!

Even in that moment I was much puzzled to think what the mysterious plan for the redemption of Italian liberty could be which was to open its first scene in Paris. Every body knew, however—even I did, who took but little interest in politics, home or foreign—that the French Government, or at least its chief, was willing enough just then to play into the hands of the legitimate and despotic Italian rulers—the Bourbons, and Parmas, and Modenas, and the Pope; and the arrest of Salaris and the discovery of any thing like a genuine plot might probably mean his instant surrender to Pope or Austrian or Austria's vassal. Sentence of death had been recorded against him

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in some of the Italian States; and he had but lately effected a desperate and romantic escape from a Lombard prison. The surrender of such a man now to any of his old enemies would probably mean a short shrift and a sharp axe.

This man near me is trust-worthy? He must be. He seemed to be fully in the confidence of Salaris, and Christina spoke of him as a man of undoubted truth.

He was still eying me curiously. I addressed him in Italian, and in a low tone.

"I think I have had the honor of meeting you before, signor?"

He nodded his head, and smiled.

"In England—a few days ago?"

"Up among the mountains; yes."

"You know I am a friend of Signor Salaris?"

"Yes, signor."

"He has told you so?"

"Often."

A more laconic person one could not easily meet; and he indulged in not the slightest gesticulation.

"You will trust me."

He nodded, and glanced round to see that the *garçon* was not too near.

"Does any one here speak Italian?" I asked, thinking that he dreaded being overheard and understood.

"I think not, signor. But they may know that we are speaking Italian—and even that—" he finished the sentence with another glance round and a slight shrug.

"Perhaps English would do better. Do you speak English?"

"Oh yes, some."

"You understand it?"

"Much well."

"Then," I said, speaking slowly that he might follow my meaning, "I have reason to fear that you and our friend the signor are betrayed."

He started and frowned; then, after a moment of silence, said,

"Impossible."

"It is possible; it is true. I have seen and spoken to the man who betrayed you. He told me he had done it, or meant to do it. Take care! I do not know what your plans are, or what you are doing in Paris; but I tell you that I fully believe every thing either is now known to the police here, or will be known before night."

He looked grim and set his teeth, and a low red fire burned in his eye. I began to tell him exactly what I knew; but I had so often to repeat what I said, and he had such difficulty in following me, despite his professed mastery of English, that I discarded his objection to Italian, and told him my story in his own language. I told him that a man whom I knew to be partly in Salaris's confidence, and who was now in Paris, had warned me to leave the city before night, and hinted, or more than hinted, that he had given information to the government which would lead to arrests. And I give him my own view of the character of the man who had told me this, and my belief that in this at least he was quite capable of keeping his word.

"This man's name, signor?"

I hesitated. Ought I to betray even the wretch who was betraying others? There was a savage gleam in my companion's eyes which boded ill to a *traditore*. After all, the wretched Stephen Lyndon had had some thrill of good-nature in him toward me, and had endeavored to save me from what he supposed to be a great danger. No, I could not give up his name; and I told the Italian so.

"I ask you," he said, quietly, "because all would depend upon that. He may tell all he knows, and yet tell nothing."

"But he clearly told me that he would betray Salaris."

"Possible. The signor does not quite understand. It may be that he is set on to betray something that is truly nothing, in order to turn away attention from the real business. I do not know."

"Do you know where Salaris is?"

"Not where he is now. I hope to see him in Paris to-night."

"Can you not find him out and tell him?"

"Yes, I can do that; it is my duty to do it at once. He will know what to do. Could the signor remember the exact words told to him by this person who warned him? That would be of great importance to know."

I tried to repeat, as well as I could, the exact words Lyndon had used. But the attempt was a failure; I had only a vague recollection.

"Perhaps the person did not quite understand all he was saying? Perhaps he conveyed more than he meant—or less? The signor speaks Italian well—oh, very well indeed; but I can discover that sometimes he uses a word with not quite the meaning, or more than the meaning he would express. Now this is of great moment. The person who spoke to you may have impressed on you too much or too little."

"No, no; there was nothing of the kind. He was not talking Italian, but English—his own tongue and mine."

The Italian's eyes flamed again. He had laid a trap for me, and I had blundered right into it.

"Thanks, signor," he said, rising from his chair. "I have now what I would know. I thought so! I know who is the man who spoke in his own tongue, English, to the signor. The signor evidently always suspected him? So did I—always. Adieu, signor! The news is ill news that the signor brings; but it is not perhaps yet too late."

He saluted me gravely, and walked quickly down the Champs Elysées toward the Place de la Concord, leaving me much bewildered with doubt as to whether I had done Salaris any good after all; whether Lyndon was not a vain

old madman, who bragged of a capacity to do harm which he did not possess; and whether I had not handed the wretch over to a vengeance which it was not in his power to deserve. If I could only see Salaris and speak with him! I sprang up, and ran as fast as I could after the Italian, in the hope of overtaking him and inducing him to confide to me something of my friend's whereabouts; but before I could make much way through groups of holiday-makers and children he had quite disappeared. I spent a horrible hour or two in the odious position of one who just knows that something evil or dangerous is going forward, and fancies he only wants a little light, a little opening, to be able to prevent it, and is groping here and there to no effect, while he feels that every moment lost brings the dreaded thing nearer. I could do literally nothing, and yet I was so near to being able to do something!

I had engaged to sing the following night in London with Christina; otherwise I would gladly have remained in Paris, in the faint, futile ghost of a hope of meeting Salaris, and being perhaps able to prevail on him to leave France at once and draw out of whatever enterprise he had engaged in. Time ran on while I thought and debated with myself, and fretted and fumed in this idle way; and at last it came to this, that I must either go at once, or make up my mind to break my engagement, telegraph that I could not leave Paris, and stay.

I adopted the resource of many a puzzled and idle man, and invited the Fates and Chances to settle the question for me.

A bird was swaying on the branch of a chestnut just in front of me. He was about to take flight.

"Come," I said to myself, "if the bird flies to the right, I will leave Paris; if he flies to the left, I will remain."

He shot from the swinging bough, and flew in the direction of the Arch of Triumph, on my right.

I got up instantly, walked to the Place de la Concord, hailed a *voiture*, and was presently on my way to the terminus of the railway to Rouen and Dieppe. I crossed the Channel that night, not without a feeling that I was like a man running away from the camp the night before a battle.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CHRISTINA'S LAST TRIUMPH.

This had not been, on the whole, a brilliant season with Christina. She opened magnificently: her voice perfect, her physical powers apparently quite restored. A week had hardly passed when a change came, and she was attacked at once by hoarseness and nervous weakness. Then she took a few nights' rest, and apparently recovered; then she sang for a night or two more, and fell back again. More than once, when she was announced for some one of her great parts, she had to give up at the last moment, and little printed notifications laid in every box and stall told disappointed audiences that this singer or that had undertaken to act as substitute for Madame Reichstein. The West End public is at once undemonstrative and exacting, and Madame Reichstein was openly and generally accused of being willful, capricious, and ill-tempered. Stories were repeated of the manner in which she had taken offense at this or that imaginary slight, and peremptorily told the manager, at the last moment, that she positively would not sing. She began to be quietly regarded as one on whom reliance could not be placed; whom success had spoiled; who was ungrateful to her best patrons and admirers. This sort of thing even found its way into newspapers; and a comic journal had some pleasantries about the amazement of an audience when Madame Reichstein, who had been announced, did actually sing—and such like stuff.

All this pained and vexed Christina, and of course only helped to make her more nervous, and less able to command her physical resources. She was simply the most conscientious artist I have ever known. She was absolutely without the petty caprices and whims which spoil so many singers, men as well as women. But she was not only too conscientious as an artist to evade her duties; she delighted in them; they were her happiness—lately perhaps her only happiness. To me my operatic parts were mere drudgery; mechanical, mercenary toil, to which I went reluctantly, from which I escaped with a sense of relief. To her they were excitement, exhilaration, delight. She breathed freely on the stage, as in some congenial and delicious atmosphere. Her inability to sing never disappointed even the most sympathetic audience so much as it disappointed herself. She told me often that she had passed many of those evenings of disappointment in unceasing, uncontrollable tears. It was therefore a bitter addition to her trouble to be suspected of petulant and unworthy caprice, because of a physical weakness which grieved her to the heart.

Thus far, then, the season had been fitful and disappointing. At last Christina was persuaded to take a few weeks of absolute rest; to nurse her voice, and give it a fair chance to recover its power. She felt convinced, at the end of the interval, that her strength was quite restored, for the time at least, and she made up her mind to regain her place before the glory of the season waned. A new opera had for some time been heralded from Vienna and Paris, as full of splendid music and grand dramatic effects. The bringing out of this opera in London had been delayed hitherto only in order that Christina might have the first part in it: and the press and the public were beginning to grumble a little over the delay. It was now announced at last, with Christina for its heroine —it had been rehearsed and postponed again and again—and it was waited for with an al-

most unparalleled expectation and excitement. I had the tenor part, which I too had rehearsed ever so many times; and the first performance was fixed for the night after that on which I left Paris. My non-appearance would therefore have been a deplorable disturbance; but, as I have said, I appealed to the oracle; and I reached London in good time, none the worse for my hasty flight to Paris.

The great hour came, and with it came Christina, resolved to reconquer her place at any risk or sacrifice.

You would not have thought Christina Reichstein had been recently sunk in nervous debility, had you seen her as she came on the stage that memorable evening. She had, in one sense, her position to retrieve, and she felt it. I knew the moment I saw her that she came to conquer; and she did conquer. Hers was in every way that sympathetic sensitive nature to which any excitement lends momentary strength and the capacity for the time to prevail. The consciousness that she had to succeed was to her success itself. Not in her brightest days—the days of her too brief prime—did she ever, I believe, sing as she sang that night. If in earlier years her voice wanted any thing, it wanted occasionally a certain shading away and tenderness of tone. Perhaps her condition of mind, perhaps even her recent illness, helped now to supply this want. I know that the want existed no longer. She looked queenly in form as she moved across the stage; and beautiful in the face which recent illness had softened into a paler tenderness than commonly belonged to it. What is there in the superstition of aristocracy which even still lurks, like the belief in ghosts, in the instincts of most people? Why, this daughter of a German toy-maker looked every inch a queen. A queen? I have seen many queens, and not one of them ever looked so queenly as she did that night. Her voice thrilled the theatre; and her noble lyrical style, inspired of the soul, free from every trick and artifice of the stage, uplifted, one might think, every heart to its own regions on its own soaring melody.

I felt a thorough pride in her triumph: all the more so because I hoped I had in some way helped toward it. Lately, too, my heart was beginning to be filled with affection and pity for her, and sorrow for her. Love that had died had sent its pale ghost of pure and pitying friendship to haunt her and watch over her.

I clasped her hand in delight and congratulation at the close of the first act, and she returned the pressure with no less warmth.

"See," said she, "how exuberant I am in my delight; I have cut my hand!" She drew off her glove and held up one hand, and I saw tiny drops of blood trickling down her white fingers.

"It was my ring that did it: it cut through glove and all. Salaris's ring—look at his miniature." She touched a spring, and a tiny locket, set among brilliants in the ring, flew open, and showed me a little miniature of the grave, melancholy, manly face of her husband.

"Salaris reproves me," she continued, faintly smiling, "for forgetting him in a poor stage-triumph. But he would not blame me, if he knew all, Emanuel. I have made up my mind to devote myself to him for the rest of my life. The curtain falls for me with this season. I will sing no more. I have vowed a vow, Emanuel, and I will keep it. If Heaven brings him safe out of his present enterprise I will devote myself to him, and be for the rest of my life what I have not yet truly been—his wife."

Her face flushed as she spoke, and her eyes fell.

"You have not received any message from him?" I asked, not caring to encourage her to dwell upon this proffered one-sided bargain with the powers above.

"Not yet; but I think I may rely upon receiving news from him in some way to-night. You shall know what I hear as soon as it reaches me."

She did not know how lately I had been to Paris: I had no motive or heart to tell her.

We separated just then. I need not speak of the progress of the second act. Enough to say, that Christina made it a promenade of triumph, a conqueror's procession for her.

And then the news of Salaris came at last. I had hardly quitted her when many mouths told me of it. It had been made publicly known in the House of Commons, and had been flashed to the Opera, the theatres, and the clubs. It had throbbed along the telegraph wires only too quickly; and it was, for all its haste, but too true. Yes, we heard not from Christina's husband, but of him, that fatal night. The new grand project for the liberty of Italy had exploded in the bombs of an assassin; and the great obstacle which was to be removed from the way of the young liberty was standing in the way still! In a word, an insane and monstrous attempt had been made that very night in Paris—an attempt at what was believed to be the slaying of a despot; and it had only ended in the slaughter of some half-dozen people, the very worst of whom, in patriotic eyes, were but poor police officials, the humble menials of despotism, who would have served liberty just as faithfully as they served tyranny if they had but the chance. And Salaris's name was named as that of the soul and leader of the conspiracy.

The curtain was already up for the last act, and I had no time to find out whether the news had reached Christina, or to endeavor to prevent it from reaching her. Indeed, my time was come. I was already expected on the stage, and I was almost out of breath and out of capacity for my part when I came on. She was there before me. She had yet heard nothing. Her eyes only expressed surprise and good-humored rebuke at the awkwardness of the position in which my momentary delay he

nearly placed her. I gasped and choked in endeavoring to sing. She looked more surprised, and even a little petulant. I endeavored to do better, and succeeded tolerably. The scene got through somehow; but I fear that if I helped the *prima donna* in the other scenes, I was rather a damaging influence in this.

She did not appear in the next scene; I did. Then came the last.

She returned; and I saw at the first glance that all was known. What a gaze that was which met mine! Her face was rigid and livid; her eyes were lit with a low pale fire, such as one might imagine gleaming from the eyes of the dead restored for a moment to life. I scarcely understood how any one could look at her and not shudder; I can not still understand how any one could look at her and fail to see that some terrible agony burned in those glittering eyes. I had to take her hand; it was cold as death; it gave back not the faintest return to the pressure with which I endeavored to assure her of sympathy, and to offer some poor encouragement.

The house applauded her all the more for the deep and genuine tragedy that was written in her face.

"How devilish well Reichstein makes up!" I distinctly heard a swell say in one of the stage-boxes. "How does she make herself look so ghastly all in a moment?"

It was some piece of lyric agony, some catastrophe of separation and broken hearts and love and death; no matter what. Those who saw her, all but myself, accepted her pallid cheeks and spectral gleaming eyes as the very triumph of theatrical art. At first her voice choked and trembled; then sounded hollow, ghostly, heart-rending. Oh, but it suited the part she had to play, and the house first listened in a deep awe-stricken silence, and then broke into a murmur of awakening applause.

She had determined to go through with the task. Whether her husband was dead or living, escaped or a prisoner, really guilty or not guilty, she could not know; but a feeling of desperate loyalty to him and his secrets and their secret relationship constrained her to give, if possible, no sign which might reveal any thing that perhaps he, if living still, would have concealed. She told me afterward that in all the agony of horror and doubt, one thought came up clearly in her mind—that if her husband were yet alive, it might perhaps be somehow in her power to help him to escape, if only she could still keep their relationship a secret. She told me, too, that from the first moment she felt convinced that he had been drawn innocently and as an instrument into that plot; and whatever might be his illusions or his plans, he had never been knowingly a party to an assassination.

I confess I did not think so. The words he had let fall about the obstacle to be removed now came back to my mind with fearful force; the words, and the manner and tone which accompanied them. I remembered, too, that he told me there were things no man but an Italian might be asked to do for Italy.

What I did wonder at was the nature of the projected tyrannicide; the reckless, indiscriminate, cowardly slaughter of the innocent, in the wild hope of including the guilty among them. I could, after what I had heard, believe in Salaris planning and trying to execute a deed of tyrannicide in the high Roman fashion; I could think of him as a Brutus; I found it hard indeed to believe in him as a Fieschi.

Christina went on with her task. Many, many have indeed come forward to the footlights as she did, and bending down with hands clasped upon a bursting heart, have warbled their notes of lyric joy, or love, or grief, while agony of true human sorrow was helping to produce the convulsive throbs which the audience wondered and delighted to hear. Men and women have acted their parts through, desperately, to the end; have stifled physical agony, and struggled with the convulsions which they knew to be the beatings of death at their door, and made life triumph, at least until the fall of the curtain. All this, one might say, is but commonplace and elementary in the story of the stage. But how few have ever had a torture such as hers to conceal! To hear such tidings but by half, and to crush down anxiety and the passion of fear, and to make them serve to work along the mechanical passion and pain of the drama, like agonized captives compelled to row the galley of the conqueror, or to chant the celebration of his triumph! Was she singing, or only crying aloud in the anguish which could not be repressed? I hardly knew: but I know that such a rapturous audience I never beheld; such a triumph I never assisted in. Even then a sense came strangely over my mind of the marvelous grotesquerie, the *farouche* humor of the whole scene, as I glanced around, and saw that vast house filled with people who applauded to the repeating echo what they believed to be the triumph of stage simulation, what I believed to be the very death-cry of the broken heart. At one moment—it belonged to the situation—her head dropped upon my shoulder, and tears, the most genuine that ever fell on a stage, trickled on my tragedy trappings. And I yelled, as best I might, my lyric farewell; and the audience applauded, as enthusiastically as a fashionable audience ever could applaud; and she clung around me with such passionate force that I could hardly tear myself away, while her voice soared and shook and trembled in the air as if music itself were uttering its farewell to life. I did just for one moment release myself, that the need of the scene might be satisfied, and I stood for an instant out of the sight of the spectators until the curtain came down amidst new bursts of applause, and I sprang forward just in time to catch her in my arms as she fell in a faint.

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE OLD SONG.

In a day or two it became known about town, and was mentioned in most of the papers, that Madame Reichstein had exerted herself too much after her recent illness, had overtasked her strength and fallen ill again, and was ordered by her medical men to take absolute repose for some time.

Indeed, she was for many days very, very unwell. She was brought down to almost utter prostration, with frequent faintings and blood-spitting; and lay sometimes in a comatose condition for hours and hours, during which absolutely nothing could be done for her. I did not see her during all this time, but I called many times each day; and I saw her medical men, and they told me frankly that her life trembled on a mere chance—that the probabilities seemed to be that she would die. I did not know then, but I came to know after, that she had long suffered from a serious chronic complaint, which over-exertion or excitement of any kind was sure to aggravate and might render fatal.

Yet she did not die. She grew better. During the worst two or three days she had been almost wholly unconscious—happily unconscious, perhaps. Before she had gained mental and bodily strength enough to understand all that had passed, there was news which it was good for her to hear.

Gradually the full story of what had happened in Paris came in upon us. First as concerned us was the fact that Christina's husband had not been taken; had not been actually seen at all on the spot when the conspiracy exploded, of which he was named as the foremost leader. Those who had been arrested were to be immediately tried, and it was known that rewards were held out for the capture of several others—highest reward of all for the capture of Salaris.

I was glad to believe that my warning had, after all, been the means probably of saving my friend's life. I was glad to find that most people in London who had known any thing of the Italian cordially and at once acquitted him of any complicity whatever in the attempt at assassination. Some were indignant at the bare idea of such a thing; declared Salaris a man of honor wholly above such a suspicion; and asserted that the dragging of his name into the business was a paltry scheme of the French Government to discredit and defame an honorable and gallant enemy. Many went so far as to say that the whole thing was a "plant" from beginning to end; that the alleged conspirators were the hirelings of *mouchards;* that the deaths which had taken place were mere accident, the result of an unforeseen bungle; that nobody would be executed; that Cayenne or Toulon and forced labor would mean in the case of the convicted persons a quiet well-pensioned retirement into obscurity; and that the plot had been got up only to bring discredit on the Revolution, and to justify the French Government in the eyes of Europe for any severity of repression it might afterward find it convenient to adopt. Salaris had been a favorite in London; he had been admired by the West End, and had always demeaned himself like a brave man and a modest gentleman; the account of his former escape from prison had been the sensation of a season, disconcerting even the African travelers and the new poets; there was nothing whatever about him of the melodramatic conspirator or the Leicester Square refugee; and in some quite unusual way patriotism and respectability seemed to blend in his person. So that London generally curled the lip of quiet contempt at the story of my friend's complicity in the great assassination.

One incident connected with the whole business seemed to have come miraculously to confirm this view. Had the French police really desired to convince England that there was sham in the affair, they could not have done any thing better than just what they did. For the very night of the catastrophe, and before the dead and wounded had yet been well removed from the scene, they hastened to the Hotel Bristol in the Place Vendôme, and arrested Mr. George Stamford Lyndon, English deputy of Parliament, as an accomplice in a plot to assassinate the chief of the French Government.

London received the news first with a cry of indignation, next with a burst of laughter, and then again with a cry of indignation. Before many days had elapsed Mr. Lyndon himself appeared in person on the floor of the House of Commons, and told his own story: the story of his arrest, and of his release. I read his speech; and I must say it was moderate, straightforward, and gentlemanlike. He told the House that he scorned even to pledge his word as an English gentleman that he had never had any part in, or known any thing of any plot to murder. And the House applauded the manful scorn and energy of his tone. When he said, "I pass by that now and forever," the House cheered again. But he frankly owned that he had been a sympathizer with Italian schemes for independence; that he had given somewhat largely to the cause; and that he had done his best to assist men who here in England were endeavoring to promote a rising against the Austrians in Lombardy and Venetia. He had endeavored to do, he said, for Italian independence, what members of her Majesty's present Government had done not so many years back for Greek independence; and this he was not ashamed of doing, and would always continue to do. Naturally, therefore, he had been in correspondence with many Italian exiles, among the rest with some who were now accused of being accomplices in the assassination plot. This doubtless explained his arrest. He had no complaint to make of the French authorities. He had given the

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precisely the same explanation he now gave the House; and had only added that he was ready at any time whatever to take his trial in Paris, if the French Government thought proper to make any charge against him of conspiracy with murderers. His explanation had been courteously received, and he was at once declared at liberty. He had no complaint to make. He had, on the contrary, every allowance to make for the excitement of the French authorities at such a time; and, so far as he was concerned, he thought the whole subject deserved no further discussion.

Many people expected that something else was coming. Every body knew of the close intimacy between Lyndon and Salaris. Every one, therefore, expected to hear from Lyndon an emphatic declaration of his confidence in his friend's innocence, and an indignant repudiation of the charge made against him. Every one was disappointed: Mr. Lyndon never mentioned Salaris's name; and only repudiated the charge of conspiracy to assassinate when it applied to himself.

"Cautious old humbug, that Lyndon is," a journalist of some note remarked to me that night at a club which I frequented. "I've just been to the House, and heard his explanation. Of course it was all right; and the House cheered him immensely. But would you believe it, he never said one syllable on behalf of poor Salaris. He knows perfectly well that Salaris is as incapable of any share in that rascally business as he himself, or as you or I; and yet he never said a word on his behalf. The fact is, he thinks this business makes Italian patriotism of all kinds seem rather disreputable in our British eyes, and he would not utter a word which might appear to make him responsible for the character of any individual Italian."

My friend expressed, I think, the common feeling. I did not blame Lyndon; and though of course I never openly dissented from the general belief in Salaris's innocence, I could not in my heart acquit him. The whole thing was a wonder and mystery to me. First, that Salaris could for any purpose become a party to such a plot; next, that having promoted it, and in some inconceivable way reconciled his own soul and conscience, and sense of honor and humanity, to it, he should have held back from taking a personal part in it; lastly, that having directed the playing of the game, he should have shrunk from the paying of the forfeit.

But this, too, came to be explained at last. By safe means a letter came to Christina's hand, on which no eyes but hers and mine ever glanced, and which contained much that, for the present at least, perhaps forever, must remain a secret. What especially concerned us was that it explained Salaris's own part in the transaction. He had left Paris not after, but before, the deed; he had gone in despair and disgust; he had planned and urged, and volunteered for, a deed of what he called and believed to be national vengeance and personal sacrifice, quite, as indeed I had believed, after the high Roman fashion. He offered himself, or himself and the man Benoni, to lead the way, to attempt the deed personally; others, if he failed, to follow the example. To do or die was not his purpose, but to do and die. But he could not animate those who were his associates with this high, desperate resolve. They were for taking into consideration the element of personal safety; to do the deed, and if possible escape. Therefore they planned a wild, indiscriminate slaughter, in which the one enemy *might* perish, and the murderers *might* escape. All this seemed to Salaris as frivolous as it was hideous. It made a murder what he thought a sacrifice. To him the one essential condition distinguishing the tyrannicide from the assassin was that the former must devote his own life to secure the death of the tyrant, and of the tyrant alone. He did his best to persuade them to abandon their project, over which indeed he sickened, and he still thought to carry out his own. But my warning reached him, and he opened his eyes and saw that he was watched. He left Paris in time, postponing, not abandoning, his design; and the night after he had left the city came the catastrophe, as much of a surprise and a horror to him as to Europe in general. He would have been a Brutus, a Scævola; and behold, he saw his name branded as that of a Faux.

He was, then, guilty of the intent to kill a crowned and sceptred man. Would such a deed have been wholly, utterly guilty and base? I do not stop to inquire into that moral question; I never was much of a moral philosopher; I know Salaris was not a base and evil man, and I know what we are all taught at school to think of Brutus. But there are anachronisms of deed which it is, *ipso facto*, something like a crime to commit; and just such a crime had Salaris planned. I know from his letter that he was glad now he had not done the deed; I feel sure his intended victim would have been safe, alone and unarmed, in his presence forever after. There are things which we never fully understand till we see them caricatured; I think Salaris understood at last the true nature of his projected piece of antique devotion when he saw it caricatured in outlines of blood.

But he declared his firm conviction, a conviction never to be shaken, that the catastrophe itself had been encouraged, fostered, and actually brought to a head by the agents of the French Government. They had done it, he said, to bring disgrace and odium on the Italian patriots, and to prevent other attempts more direct and desperate from being made. This he insisted on, and he supported his belief by evidences which I can not report. He added his conviction that one man, an Englishman, had been a prime mover in the plot on behalf of the agents of the police. To all this I attached not too much importance. It looked wildly improbable; yet what could be more im-

probable than those passages of the story which had actually happened? I neither believed nor disbelieved; I was glad he had escaped and had no part in the bloody business, and had at the very worst only planned and dreamed to be a tyrannicide, not an indiscriminate slayer.

At one time, he said, his feelings of horror at the deed were such that he determined to give himself up to the French Government, and, proclaiming boldly what he had really planned to do, insist upon being tried, that it might be made clear he had no part in what was actually done. But his friends—he had some knot of friends every where—reasoned him out of this scheme of foolish chivalry. They convinced him that if he surrendered himself, the French Government would most assuredly contrive to convict him of the very crime he detested, all the more because he detested it; and then came to his hand the evidences, such as they were, which satisfied him and those around him that the most hideous part of the business was the outcome of a police plot. He had resolved then at last to leave the scenes of so many unavailing and abortive struggles forever, or, if not forever, until some auspicious hour should arrive when a brave, true-hearted man could make a sacrifice for his country with hope and without shame.

I visited Christina every day while she was recovering, and sometimes sat with her alone for a few minutes. She recovered slowly, but very steadily, from the influence of overexcitement, mental and physical, and began to resume her brightness both of look and manner. She lay upon a sofa, still weak indeed; but with something of the reaction which follows naturally any better modification of evil news stimulating her, she was cheerful and almost joyous. Her manner, too, had lost much of the constraint which used to disfigure it, and cause it to seem affected of late. She looked now to me more like the old Christina than she had been since we both were much younger.

One of the days when I came to see her, I found her reading a letter, and looking flushed and excited over it.

"Look at this letter, Emanuel," she said; "and tell me whether I ought to laugh or cry. Stay, you could not understand it without some explanation. It is from our dear friend, Mr. Lyndon. Now listen, and then you shall read it. When I heard that dreadful story from Paris, one of my first thoughts was, that I had unconsciously entangled *him* in the business; and that he would believe I had purposely deceived him. This rested heavily on my mind; and as soon as I could hold a pen, I wrote him a letter, assuring him that I was as innocent and ignorant an agent in the matter as himself; and I asked him to come and see me. He might have come, might he not, for the kindness of old recollections? To-day, at last, he sends me his reply. There it is; read it. No—don't hesitate; I want you to read it—I ask you to read it."

I took the letter in my hand. There was not much to read; it was this:

"Connaught Place.

"Dear Madame,—I regret that I am unable to do myself the honor of visiting you. I can not think, however, that much good could come of an interview, or that any very satisfactory explanations could be exchanged. It is clear that I was grossly deceived, and that my own credulity was much to blame. I do not much care to inquire into the relative share which we all had in the delusion. You are, no doubt, innocent of any knowledge of the detestable plot which I was made the means of helping and promoting; but there were deceptions practiced on me of another kind, and of which I presume you do not feel ashamed. I am, however, ashamed of having been so deceived. I am conscious of having rendered myself ridiculous, and I deserve to be laughed at. But I prefer being laughed at behind my back rather than to my face; and therefore I take with a good grace the lesson I have received, and have the honor to remain

"Your obedient servant,

"George Stamford Lyndon."

I read the letter through, then turned back to the first sentence, and read it again.

"Your judgment, Emanuel? Am I to laugh or cry?"

"It is an insult, that is certain; and it is characteristic; but I can not help asking, is it quite undeserved?"

"No, not undeserved; and therefore all the harder to be borne. I suppose I did allow this vain and selfish old man to flirt with me, or to think he was flirting with me. I did not dislike him; indeed, his companionship sometimes pleased me. I was embittered with life in many ways, and I found his sharp cynicism congenial. I flattered him and paid court to him, and I allowed him to flatter me and pay court to me. I did it to win the man over to our cause—at least, to my husband's cause—and to make him useful to projects about which, Heaven knows, I knew little, and cared just as little. I did not see through him at the first. He even paid me attentions which, if my husband had but known—well, I am ashamed of the whole thing now, and I was many times ashamed and annoyed when I saw your eyes fixed on me; and I often feared that you would think far, far worse of me than I deserved, and despise me. Yet you might have trusted me, even without explanation."

"*Beati sunt*," I could not help murmuring, in some bitterness, "*qui non viderunt*."

"Still you think harshly of me?"

"I am sorry you ever descended to any deceit, Christina. I am sorry you ever stooped for any purpose to flatter the vanity of that selfish and sensuous old man. It was a degradation; it lowered you; and I could forgive nothing that made you seem unworthy."

"It was meant, at least," she said, in an appealing, plaintive tone, "as a sort of expiation to my husband. I thought I might in some way help him in his plans, and by a little harmless deception bring him a useful ally. I am ashamed of it now; but I hardly thought of it then; and, indeed, I thought *he* saw through me at last, as I did through him, and that neither took the other *au sérieux*. Yet you, Emanuel," she added, suddenly and bitterly, "have no reason to be sorry; if I deceived him, I think I undeceived you."

I made no answer. What she said was true. It was when I watched her manner with Mr. Lyndon that I first began to doubt the strength of my love for her. The very day I first saw her with him at Richmond something told me that she was—as I wsote it then—not my Lisette any more.

Her eyes were fixed on mine, and I did not look up to meet them. She knew what thoughts were passing through my mind. She took Lyndon's letter and tore it in pieces.

"That is gone, and with it go the memories," she said. "You must forget this, Emanuel; and you must remember me only as I was before I had ever learned to practice any deceit. There was such a time! Think of me only as I was then; and tell Lilla Lyndon of what I was then. Thank Heaven, my deceits never went far. Do you know how I think of myself often? As one of the people we read of in the old stories of my country, who sold their souls to the demon, but contrived by the help of some saint or pious monk to cheat him in the end. Well, I sold my soul to ambition and vanity; but by the help of penitence and faith, I hope I have redeemed it at the last. Stay; don't say any thing more; I am going to sing something for you. Yes, I am quite well and strong, and I mean to sing for you something that shall be a memory."

It was growing to evening, the twilight was deepening.

"No melancholy song," she said. "We must not be melancholy to-night, for we have reason to be happy. *You* surely have, and I too; for my dear, noble-hearted Salaris has escaped from a great danger and a great wrong; and he is not the only one," I heard her murmur to herself as she sat down to the piano; "not the only one—not the only one."

She took out a faded old piece of music, rattled some lively notes, and broke into a vivacious song. What was the song the great *prima donna* chose to sing for me? What but the very song I had heard her sing in the old seaport concert-room long ago, when she sang me into the poetic madness of first love! I listened with feelings no words could speak. The whole scene was around me; and I saw through the haze and smoke of years, and confused memories, and bewildering associations, clearly as then through a more material and vulgar smoke-film, the bright-eyed young singer again.

"Do you remember it?" she asked. "Yes, I know you do; and I give it to you now, to bear with you as a lasting memory of me. I sang it to you in the old concert-room, oh, so long ago! Yes, I sang it to you—for I saw you, Emanuel, from the first. I knew well you were there. I saw your fair hair and boyish face clearly among all the coarse stupid faces I so hated to see. And I saw, too, how enraptured you were; and I was proud and delighted. There! I close the book. I will never sing that song again!"

And she shut the book with a clang, and stood up.

This was, I may say, our last parting. I have always endeavored to remember her only as she bade me. I think of her as she was when first I knew her. The long-extinguished fire of love has left no blackened waste behind it. I remember her always with tender friendship. I remember her as one remembers some early scene of youth, which, however it may change in reality, remains in the mind unalterably beautiful, quite immortal, through age and sorrow and the changes of all things else, and time and decay, and up to the very threshold of death.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A STROKE OF RETRIBUTION.

A FEW days or weeks passed away. Christina had gone; faded, so to speak, out of our lives. She was living for the present in Lugano with her husband. The excitement of the Paris crime had been almost forgotten in London. The season was over, the opera-houses were closed, every thing looked dead. Edward Lambert and I were in town together, two moody, silent, sympathetic friends; each, as before, knowing something more of the other than he cared to talk of even to that other.

We were going home one night together, and our way lay through the Haymarket. We turned into a cigar-shop to get a cigar, and Lambert was talking of a game of billiards. As we stood upon the threshold, doubtful, a man passed slowly down the street toward the Pall Mall end. I caught a glimpse of his face under the flash of a lamp, and I knew him at once for the Italian Benoni. He did not, or would not, recognize me, although I could not help thinking I had done him a good turn once; so I came to the conclusion that, under the circumstances, he did not want to be recognized. Although I was just on the point of calling Lambert's attention to him, I checked myself, and refrained.

We did have a game of billiards, and then were leaving. As we passed through the cigar-shop a voice hailed me:

"Doth not a meeting like this make amends! I say, Temple! Hallo there!"

And briskly leaping off a chair, up rushed old Stephen Lyndon, and held out both his hands.

He was handsomely dressed, and wore elegant lavender gloves, and I think a new wig. But his face looked puckered and seamed and careworn. I did not take his hand, and indeed I would have walked away and left him but that Lambert stopped, somewhat bewildered.

"Introduce me, Temple," proceeded the unabashed Lyndon. "I *do* think I must have had the pleasure of meeting your friend before; the very remarkable contour of his face is familiar to me. Introduce me, Temple; but don't mind names. Call me for the moment Mr. Badboy; *you* understand the allusion. I don't care for much naming of names here just now—*pour des raisons.*"

"I think your name and yourself ought to be alike detestable," I began.

"Dear boy, wherefore? I have done the state some service—not this state, but the other yonder; and they know it. I have defeated the machinations of conspirators and murderers. I feel proud of it. Temple, I swear to you that on a certain day I saved France! Let us repair to yonder fane, and give thanks over Champagne. Some states know how to reward their benefactors, Temple. I have gold, Sir, red gold. Come, I long to know your friend; present me."

Ned Lambert was puzzled. Politeness, good-nature, distrust, surprise, were battling within him. He had almost begun, "Happy to have the honor, I'm sure," when I stopped him with a vehement gesture.

Then Ned said:

"I know I have seen this gentleman—this person before. Yes, I remember! He's a madman, Temple! 'Twas he that attacked me and—and Lilla, you recollect, one night at the theatre. Yes; he's mad!"

"No, Lambert, not mad; I am sorry to say not mad—not quite mad, at least. Look at him, Ned; he asks me to introduce him. I do so. That man, that disgrace to the name of Englishman, is a scoundrel and a profligate; a wretch who left his wife and daughter to starve, if they would; he has lately made himself a rascally spy for the French Government, and tried to sell, and, according to his own boast, did sell with profit, the lives of brave and foolish men. Look at him, Lambert, and know him if you will."

"Yes, look at me, Lambert," broke in Lyndon, "and know me—for I know you now—as all that our polite friend has said; and one thing more: I am Lilla Lyndon's father, Lambert; and I presume I am one day to have the honor of being your father-in-law. Let us embrace."

"Is this true?" asked Lambert, turning with pale face to me.

"It is true, Ned; that wretched creature is Lilla's father. Now you know all."

"Poor, poor Lilla! *She* knew of this; and therefore she doomed herself to live alone?"

"She did."

"Now, look here, fellows!" said Lyndon, cocking his hat more fiercely than before on the side of his head, and trying to look tall; "there is no use in talking over family affairs thus publicly. But I tell you this: *I* don't care—I'm not going to be kept out of the family councils any longer. I know all about my daughter now, and my wife too; and I'm open either to hate them or to love them. Whoever marries my daughter has to deal with me. I am not hard to deal with; but I must be conciliated, courted, paid off, if necessary. In one word, Lambert, are you prepared to treat? Are you ready to go into council?"

"No," I said, answering for him. "No, Ned, not a word with him. Better Lilla bore any persecution, or waited any time."

"This from you, Temple! I thought I had won your gratitude, at least."

"Yes; I believe you did really try to do me a good turn; and though I had no need of it, and was not in the danger you supposed, I am not ungrateful for it, and I will try to serve you yet. If you want money—"

"My good Temple! If I want money? All my life has been a perpetual want of money. Just now I do happen to be pretty flush; but, good God! I know myself—I ought to—and I shall be as hard up as ever in a few weeks. Besides, I begin to feel at last the want of a peaceful domestic life. I think I have pretty well exhausted all the stormy joys, and I am now very anxious to retire into the placid bosom of family comfort. I think I may venture to say to my future son-in-law, if he will allow me the honor so to call him, that in me he sees a reclaimed man; at least he sees in me a man who wants to be reclaimed. The one grand emotion at the bottom of my nature, Lambert, is religion. Our friend Temple will quite bear me out in that. Religion, Sir! I confess that my life of late years, and the persistent ill-treatment I have experienced from the world and my nearest relatives, has rather disturbed the religious element. But there it is still. Now I know that family affection can purify and restore it; therefore let us go in for family affection. I am to be reclaimed. *Eh, bien*, reclaim me!"

He then threw back his coat from his breast, and stood with displayed shirt-front, as if moral reclamation were to be effected by the agency of a stethoscope.

Lambert looked at me inquiringly, as if to ask, "Is this genuine?"

I looked at him with an expression which said, "Decidedly not."

"Come, Mr. Lyndon," I said, "my friend does not know you as well as I do; you want something; put it into plain words—what is it?"

The little man smote his breast theatrically, and said,

"A home."

"Any thing else?"

"A daughter."

"Mr. Lyndon," I said, rather seriously,

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"there is such a thing in the world as being too late. I am afraid you are too late."

"But look here, Temple; I want to be reclaimed; I do, by God! And I think God wants me to be reclaimed too. I don't think He hates me wholly, for I have always loved the beauty of His house, and I have loved to sing to Him. I think He could have loved me if things had just gone a little better with me. Do try me, Temple—and Lambert. I know—well, come, at least I *think* I am sincere now, I do really. I've always been repenting, of course; and I don't wonder that you are a little suspicious; but, by the Lord, I think I'm sincere this time! Don't turn away from me, lads; now don't! Come to my daughter, Lambert, and take me with you; I'll fall at her knees, I'm d—d if I don't! Look here; these are tears."

So they were; there were tears unmistakably running down his wrinkled old face, out of his blinking black eyes. I had so long been accustomed to his private theatrical displays and his easy gusts of emotion, that I was not perhaps much moved. Lambert was touched, quite touched. He held out his hand to the wretched old creature, who seized it, pressed it to his lips, and blubbered over it.

My God! if in that supreme moment a touch of true compunction did visit the heart of that unfortunate man, may it not have been too late! may it not have been too late!

Lyndon lifted up his head, and exclaimed, "Then I am saved? I shall see my daughter?"

"You shall," said poor Ned Lambert, and wrung again the old man's hand.

Now I had been anxious to bring this scene to a close. Perhaps my distrust of Lyndon was such that I disliked to see Ned Lambert touched by him. Besides, it was hardly the place for a scene. We had moved a few paces up the Haymarket, and now stood just one pace down Jermyn Street, and in the shadow: I had, by working our group gently along, got thus far at least out of the glitter and glare of the Haymarket. Still, there were people constantly passing us, and looking with some surprise at us and our gestures. Just now somebody who had been standing in a doorway came out, and, apparently attracted by curiosity, drew nearer and nearer to us. The person approached somewhat behind me, and I could only see that somebody was drawing near and listening. Now nothing can exceed the easy vacuous impudence with which street-idlers in London coolly walk up close to a group of people, and there stand, and stare, and listen. I am myself peculiarly nervous and sensitive about this sort of thing; and the vicinity of this vulgar and curious eaves-dropper made me specially uncomfortable. I was just about to turn and ask the fellow rather angrily what he wanted there, when Lyndon called to me, in a tone half triumphant, half tearful: "Not too late, Temple! recall your words, my friend! No, not too late, after all!"

At that moment the listener, whose shadow was just behind me, pushed or lurched forward, and dashed against Lyndon. So far as there was time for thought, I thought it was the lurch of a drunken man. But at the same instant I heard two sudden peculiar sounds following each other instantaneously; two sounds in each of which there was something like a thump, and something like a rattle, and Lyndon gave a wild shriek, flung up his arms, then collapsed like a man stricken with cholera, and rolled on his legs for a second, and then fell all in a heap on the pavement. And in the same instant of time the man who had rushed on Lyndon cried out the word "*Traditore!*" flashed round on me the fierce wolf-like eyes of Benoni the Italian, and then fled fast as a wild-cat down the silent darknesses of Jermyn Street.

"Look to him, Temple," shouted Lambert; "I'll be after that fellow." And he rushed away, his long legs making tremendous play along the pavement.

In a moment a group of people, chiefly women from the Haymarket, had gathered round; then a couple of policemen came up, and one went off like mad down Jermyn Street after Ned and the assassin. We lifted up Lyndon, and brought him into a public house which stands, or stood, at the Haymarket corner of the street. There we laid him on a bench. He was bleeding fearfully from two wounds, one in the breast, one just under the ear. A surgeon was sent for from across the street, and came up in a moment. While he was opening Lyndon's clothes Lyndon recovered a little from the swoon into which he had fallen, and looked up. His eyes fell on me at once.

"You are a prophet, Temple," he murmured. "It *is* too late, you see. No use, doctor! Not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church-door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve. Temple, your friends of the revolution have done for me. Tell my daughter I'm sorry, and my wife, and *your* little Lilla."

Ned Lambert had by this time quietly rejoined the group, and stood with flushed face silently looking on. Lyndon saw him, and smiled.

"Good fellow, Lambert," he said; "kind lad—I like you. I ought to say, 'Bless you, Lambert!' in the regular old style; but I can't get up to do it with the proper action. I am dying, Egypt, dying! I hope God will forgive me. I think He might forgive me if He forgives Goodboy; and Goodboy is so respectable there can't be any doubt about *him*."

I asked the surgeon in a low tone whether poor Lyndon had not better be kept quiet; he was talking away all this time incessantly, except when an occasional pang or gasp stopped his utterance for a moment. The surgeon only shook his head, and signified with a gesture that it did not matter *now*. I asked whether he had not better be removed to some hospital, or somewhere of the kind. The reply was a

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quiet gesture to the same effect—no use thinking of that *now*.

Meanwhile Lyndon lay nearly motionless on the seat where we had laid him, his head and shoulders propped by cushions taken from the benches around. His wig had fallen back from his head, and what with the bald forehead, the round, plump, beardless face, and the twinkling, restless eyes, there was a queer, pathetic, grotesque look of infancy about him, which the incessant and scarcely intelligible babble he kept up served to keep in countenance. The strange sardonic expression, now suggestive of roguery, and now almost of madness, which his face used to wear habitually, had quite faded away, and I seemed to see a striking resemblance to his daughter—that resemblance of which vague glimpses used so to perplex and tantalize me in the early days of our acquaintance.

Ned Lambert looked pityingly on.

"No hope?" he asked of the surgeon, in a whisper.

"None whatever," was the whispered reply. "It is a question of minutes. There is nothing to be done."

The idle and amazed lookers-on had now been got rid of. Nobody was in the room but the surgeon, the landlord, a couple of women—bar-maids, I suppose—two policemen, Ned Lambert, and I. Drawing Ned aside, I learned from him what had come of his pursuit. He said he was gaining upon the fugitive, when somebody—whether by design or accident he could not tell—suddenly ran from a doorway, rushed against Ned, and in the collision flung him heavily on the pavement. When he got on his feet there was nobody near. The man who had flung him down disappeared, he thought, up a court to the left. He could easily have caught him if he had followed; but he still ran on, hoping to get some sight of the assassin—a hopeless attempt. Neither sight nor sound assisted. He was turning back from the idle quest when he met the policeman coming to his assistance.

Meanwhile Lyndon babbled on. I have read that during the insanity of George III. nothing was so dreadful to those of his family who were near him as his never-ceasing unmeaning talk. I can quite understand it. Lyndon's unbroken flow of words was terrible to hear.

At last he gave a sharp groan, almost a cry, and stopped for a moment in his speech. Then he said, in a clearer and more coherent manner, although with gradually failing voice:

"Temple, my Minstrel Boy, I have been turning the matter over, and I think there is hope; I do, on my soul. There was a deal in me, only it didn't somehow come to a focus. I was very near being a good painter; I was very near being a great musician. Don't deceive yourself, Temple; *you* never will sing as I could have done once, my boy. And I might have been a religious man; and I might have been a good man. Of course I wasn't any thing. But where there's so much valuable raw material, I don't believe God means it always to lie idle. No, no; *He* doesn't make blunders, or waste good stuff in that sort of way. He'll find use for me, though I couldn't find any use for myself. Confound it all! I'm better than a rat or a black beetle. I know that my Redeemer liveth! I am sorry you seem rather wanting in the religious element, Temple; but I dare say something can be done, even for you.—Ah, not fair, George Lyndon; not fair, brother George; 'twas you did it, not I; always making me your scape-goat. Well, I did one right thing in life, d—n me!—O God, forgive me, I mean. Not too late, Temple, after all! O God!"

Lyndon gasped heavily. His head fell forward plump on his breast.

"Oh, he's dead!" said one of the bar-maids, with a little scream.

So he was.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE OLD PLACE AGAIN.

THERE is very little of a story in all this. Great heroic events and sufferings, which would naturally consolidate themselves into five acts with a grand *dénouement*, are the lot of the favored very few. My ordinary life kept on much the same after the departure of Christina, the murder of Lyndon, and the marriage, which took place within a few months, of my dear friends Ned Lambert and his Lilla Lyndon. They live in a pretty little house in Brompton. I left that neighborhood, and took lodgings near Bedford Square. It was there that I began the writing of this story, in the Bloomsbury region which the opening chapter describes, on the wet and wild evening, when, lonely, I sat down to tell my tale to him and her who would listen.

Nothing came of Lyndon's murder. The assassin was not found, nor was any trace of him discovered. What I knew I kept to myself.

I gave up the stage at once, and not too soon. I have often hinted that my voice began to give distinct signs of failure; and of late it was quite clear to me that it would not much longer bear the heroic strain of opera. So I anticipated defeat, and surrendered. "Happy the man," says the author of "Pendennis," "who quits the field in time, and yields his broken sword to Fate the Conqueror with a resigned and cheerful heart." My heart was resigned and cheerful, indeed, but not from any heroic or magnanimous qualities, to which I have not pretended, but because it never had been in the battle at all, and it was now absorbed in quite other and far better hopes than those which at the outset led me to the fight. I retired, had a farewell benefit, was banqueted by some of my friends, made a speech, was kindly and even tenderly noticed by the news-

papers, and then subsided into music-teaching and concert-singing. I quitted wild Bohemia, and became thoroughly respectable and commonplace. Nothing could be more quiet, monotonous, humdrum, lonely, than the kind of existence into which I gradually sank. Many a man makes a desperate run up the hill, full of energy and resolve, but suddenly meeting midway with some check, struggles a moment or two, grumbles a while, and then very quietly turns round and saunters down again. So it was with me; but neither the early run up, nor the later descent, was wholly merit or wholly fault of mine. I mounted in the hope of overtaking Christina Reichstein; I paused and came down because I believed that thereby I should make myself worthier—at least less unworthy—to be the husband of Lilla Lyndon.

I had to wait our self-appointed period of probation for her; and I waited, silent, patient, absorbed in the thought of her. We never interchanged letter, or word, or missive, or greeting of any kind. During the whole time I never saw her; for a long time I never heard of her, except once, when, taking up the *Morning Post*, I saw that Mr. Lyndon, M.P., and the Misses Lyndon, had arrived at the Hôtel Bristol, Paris, on their way home from Italy. I make no doubt that Mr. Lyndon took his daughter every where he could, and into all manner of distractions, in the hope of inducing her to love some one else and to forget me. I did not fear. Lilla Lyndon had contrived, unconsciously I am sure, to impress me with a sense of pure unalterable constancy which I could not doubt. She had her father's qualities, in fact, turned from bad into good, and sanctified by her purity of soul, and glorified by her noble warmth of heart. No, I could not doubt *her*.

Other doubts, indeed, I had; and they gave me many a pang. They were doubts of my own worthiness—not merely of my moral worth, for I do believe that the presence and the influence of such a woman must have stirred Barabbas to some love of goodness; but doubts of my fitness in what I may call the æsthetic or artistic way to sustain Lilla Lyndon's ideal. I could not and did not disguise from myself that her love for me had its source in pure romance—the passion of a generous girl-nature, weary of monotonous and colorless formality and respectability, for some nature on which the rays of a more romantic and highly-tinted existence fell ever so lightly. I knew that what with our secret love and my late attempt not to steal her from her sphere, Lilla had begun to look upon me as an exalted heroic kind of being. I looked into myself, and turned away with a pang of shame to think how unlike to all this was the reality—of dread lest she too should some time discover it and be disappointed. Would it be better, I sometimes gloomily thought, that the passages in our lives, now interrupted, should end thus—simple, sad, memorable, not to be renewed, not to be forgotten? Often, as I found myself giving way to ill humor and pettishness and littleness of any kind; as I felt tempted to snarl at friends who had passed high up the beanstalk of success and got to the castle and fairy regions at the top, while I remained idly on the dull ground below; as I recognized in myself the prickings of envy and the pangs of disappointed ambition; as I detected myself in being too lazy to change a lodging, too cowardly to give a landlady warning, too procrastinating to succeed in doing some solid service to a friend—I could not help thinking that perhaps it would be a happy thing, after all, for her, if Lilla Lyndon and I were never to meet again.

This was my pain and punishment sometimes; but for this I should have had, even in waiting for her thus in silence and separation, the light of an unchanging hope and happiness around me.

Once I went back and revisited my old birthplace town. Very little was changed there. It is exasperating, when you think you have lived through at least half a dozen lives, to come back to the place you left so long ago, and find every thing precisely as it was when you, unheeded, turned your boyish back upon it. I spent the better part of a whole day loitering on the strand where I did battle with Ned Lambert, and watching the roll of the surf, and flinging lazy pebbles in. I climbed the hillside and looked long upon the glorious scene below. Once I made an excursion in a fisherman's boat round the bay; and from the light summer-day clouds and soft blue hazy sky came suddenly heavy mist and gale (I knew them well of old); and quickly a squall arose, and a storm thundered in our ears and tattered our sails before we could reef them, and drove us off shore, blinding and baffling us with its spray. I declare that I felt a rush of life and energy such as I had not known for long, and which was positive delight. I showed a proficiency, too, in the management of the sheet which was intrusted to me, and a familiarity with the character of the sea there, which quite amazed the fisherman and his boy. I was enraptured with the storm. I was a boy again, and I roared some frantic improvisation of exulting energy to answer the defiance of the roaring waves. Our boom was torn away, and we had literally nothing for it but to run before the wind, whither the wind would. I lighted a cigar, and strove to keep it burning. I could sometimes, when the wind lifted the mist, and the spray was less blinding, catch glimpses of a distant shore, and a steep hill, and white houses scattered over it; and I thought I could find no more appropriate place to die—"where I did begin, there now I end!"—and that were I to go down there, I should always live a pure and glorified life in the sacred memory of Lilla Lyndon. But I was preserved—I trust to make her happy; and I was landed at night, the storm having abated, near a lonely public house on a little peninsula far down the coast,

wet and draggled, cold and dispirited, the energy and excitement quite washed out of me, and with the prospect of at least a fortnight's enforced relief from singing, owing to the magnificent hoarseness I felt setting in.

And I went to see poor old Miss Griffin, the organist under whose sway Christina and I used to sing, and whom I hope the reader has not quite forgotten. Miss Griffin did not look very much older, or neater, or primmer, than she used to do twenty years syne. She still played upon the very same organ—Ned Lambert's improvements had made no way here—and she had loud-voiced, demure girls singing round her on the Sunday, and practicing under her direction in the evenings of the week, and taking a quiet tea with her now and then; sometimes being scolded by her, and no doubt sometimes paying her off with smart feminine gibes when her neat, well-made-up back was turned. Every thing around Miss Griffin seemed so much the same as before, so little affected by years, that I positively looked round for Miss Griffin's mamma and the parrot, and I should not have been surprised if both had appeared in their familiar places. But Time is not to be quite disarmed—and the mamma and the parrot were gone.

Miss Griffin was very friendly, quaint, and affectionate.

"And so you became a great singer," she said, "after all? To say the truth, I never expected it of *you*. I always thought you were too idle and careless. Of course you often met Christina Braun?"

"Yes, Miss Griffin; very often."

"She was a pupil of mine once, and sang in my choir. Oh, but I forgot—of course you recollect her here."

"Perfectly well, indeed."

"Yes, yes; to be sure. Many a time you sang with her in this very room. No, though—not *this* room; the old lodgings. You see, I have been migratory since you were here."

She had changed her lodgings once in twenty years.

"Did Christina ever speak of me, Mr. Banks?" Miss Griffin took up my name, of course, in the old and original way.

"Very often, Miss Griffin; and very kindly."

"Yes, I am sure she would. She was a good-hearted creature, only I used to fear that she was too fond of display, and that she would come to no good. And she became a great singer too?"

"She became a great singer indeed. That is quite certain, Miss Griffin."

"Yes, a gentleman here, son of Mr. Thirlwall, our clergyman—you recollect?—was up in London once, and he told me he heard Christina at the Opera, and that the house was crowded, and the Queen was there. He did not speak of you; but this was before you came out, I suppose. And she has made a great fortune, and retired from the stage?"

"I believe so, Miss Griffin; at least she has retired from the stage."

"Already! Dear, dear! Only the other day she was a little girl here—oh, quite a little girl. And you were a boy; and now—"

"And now I am a 'grizzled, grim old fogy,' you were going to say, Miss Griffin?"

"Nonsense! Indeed I was going to say nothing of the kind; for if you were to be thought old, I don't know what could be said of *me*. And you are not married yet? I wonder you didn't marry Christina. I remember now that I thought at one time you were sweet upon her; but certainly you were too young then."

After a while I asked Miss Griffin to play something in memory of old acquaintance. She did so, very kindly and readily, playing, indeed, with some skill; and even, on a little pressure, sang a quaint old song, with which, some twenty years back, I used to be perhaps rather more familiar than I much cared to be. It sounded in my ear now enriched by such kindly, softening, saddening associations, that it seemed almost like an evening hymn.

Then she insisted on my singing something for her out of one of the operas in which, as she was pleased to put it, I had made my greatest success. I asked her to choose for herself, and she selected, of all others, something from the very opera in which I sang with Christina for the last time. I sang it as well as I could with the hoarseness of my boating-excursion growing on me; and a dark-eyed, pale-cheeked girl, too timid to open her lips, accompanied me. What a dreary business it was to me! It was the very ghost of a song.

This done, I prepared to leave.

"I suppose I shall never see you again," said Miss Griffin. "Though I think, whenever you get married, you ought to bring your wife to see me. You ought to be married now. Don't let it get too late. Well, well, how odd it is! The other day only, it seems to me, I thought you quite too young to marry; and now I am urging you not to let it grow too late."

"Just the way in life, Miss Griffin. One day we are too young, and we resolve to wait a little and think the matter over; and we think a little too long, and behold we wake up and we are too old."

"Ah, that is just the way with *me*. I thought of going to live in London once, when I heard that every body from this place was doing so well there—even poor Edward Lambert, who wasn't clever or brilliant at all, you know, quite making a fortune, I'm told—but I put off going from time to time, and now I am too old."

"You must be very lonely here, Miss Griffin."

"I used to be very lonely at first, after my dear mamma died; but I have grown used to it now. I have the church to attend to, and my choir, and the pupils. I suppose every body is lonely in one way or another, more or less, except, of course, great people who mix in the

fashionable world of London, like Christina Braun and you."

Yes; except such as Christina and I. Other people are lonely; but we who have free souls, it touches us not!

I took a friendly leave of good old Miss Griffin; never, in all probability, to see her again.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"BRIGHT AS THE BREAKING EAST."

THE year was over; that strange, dreamy, solitary, silent year of my life was gone at last. I was free to seek out Lilla Lyndon and ask her to be my wife. I had been filled with hope and confidence all through the time, and only longing that the day should come when I could realize my hopes. Now that the time had come, I was tormented with doubts, distrusts, despondency. I had not, indeed, to agonize me the sudden fear of Wordsworth's lover lest the beloved should be dead. People of Mr. Lyndon's wealth and position live in a glass house in London: any body with the slightest interest in the matter can follow them in all their movements—in their going from town to country, from London to the Continent, in their dinner-parties and balls. Nothing remarkable could have happened to Lilla without my hearing of it through half a dozen channels. Of late I hardly ever visited Ned Lambert and his wife without hearing that the latter had just received some kind letter, or message, or perhaps even a visit from Lilla. I had several times heard rumors that Lilla was to be married to this or that desirable and aristocratic or wealthy personage, and these rumors did not alarm me. Nothing, in fact, had occurred to give me fear, and Lilla had impressed me gradually, indescribably, with a faith in her constancy which was the nearest approach to religious devotion I had ever had. Yet the time had come to prove her, and I was filled with distrust and despondency.

So far as I could analyze the feeling, it arose from the old deep sense of my own unworthiness. What had I to give her for her love? What had I done that I should be called living into heaven? I who had always been buffeted through life, without time or chance to develop whatever elements of good might be in me; I who had never troubled myself about religion or morals in any high and spiritual sense, but merely gone my way whither Fate and the hour would—what had I done to deserve the love of such a woman? What could I give her for it? What warrant had I that I should always be able to hold it?

I think, to be happy, a man ought to be supremely selfish or sublimely good. He ought to have either a dominating will or a dominating conscience. I envy people who look out for the right, and, seeing it, go straight along that path, without hesitation or after-thought, whether it lead to happiness or torment, to shame or splendor, because it is the right. I have sometimes, in lower moods, envied those who follow, unthinking and reckless, their dominant will—who do the thing that pleases them, who are unjust and fear not. But those who are not selfish enough to think only of self, who are not sublime enough to ignore self altogether, they have often a trying time; and I am one of them. If I could now have thought only of myself, I should have been happy. Perhaps if I could have thought only of Lilla, I should have been happy too, and with a far purer happiness. But I could not forget my own life, my own follies, faults, weaknesses, roughnesses, sins; and I thought if, since I saw her last, she has reconsidered her resolve, if she has seen some one who is in every way more worthy of her than I, and has found that she could love him better—every friend she has on earth must approve her change of mood, and I—even I—could not condemn her. And though I did not fear that this would be the end, my very faith in her but deepened and embittered my sense of hopeless inferiority.

One resolve I made; the Christian reader will, of course, condemn it, and regard me as abhorred because of it; the practical, cynical reader will smile at the idea, and think I never meant what I said. It is the truth, however. If any thing whatever should have occurred to break the engagement between Lilla Lyndon and me, I was determined not to live any longer. I would not confront any more of a futile, good-for-nothing, ignoble existence without love and without hope. If this glorious, delicious prospect which Heaven had so suddenly and strangely held out to me of a regenerated and exalted life, with love in it and a purpose in it—if that prospect should be as suddenly and as strangely withdrawn, I would accept the decree as a sentence of dismissal; I would take it as a declaration that I had no farther hope or business in life, and I would get out of life accordingly. On this—I declare it now in all calmness, and looking back from a distance of years—I was resolved; and the resolve sustained me. Come the worst, there was something to fall back upon—there was a means of escape. I believed that Heaven would not judge my decision too sternly, and at least I was resolved to trust my soul rather to heaven than to earth. Any thing in preference to any more of the meaningless, barren, good-for-nothing, loveless, homeless, hopeless life I had been leading for now some fifteen years. One way or another, let that at least end.

Grim resolve for a lover going to meet his love; but, grim as it was, it strengthened, consoled, and animated me.

Lilla is of age to-day. She is her own mistress. She can accept me or reject me of her own free-will, and no one can say her nay. I will go to-day—this very day—and know all. I will not write to her, I will not go to her house. But though I have never seen her since our

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parting in Paris, and never heard from her; though we have never interchanged the briefest message or greeting, I know that, if she is still of the same resolve as she was, she will walk in Kensington Gardens this day. I know that if she does not come there, all is over. The same impulse which brings me there would bring her, if her object were the same as mine.

I dressed with immense and exhausting care that day, and looked in the glass nearly as often as if I were a girl going to her first ball. But the result did not strike me as satisfactory; and at last I gave up the attempt at self-adornment and improvement in a kind of despair.

The day was not bright. For summer-time it was singularly dark and gray. No sun shone, the air was dense, the sky all hung with heavy clouds, the leaves rustling and blowing as if autumn had already set in. If one were to take his omen from the heavens and the atmosphere, this were a day to look for disaster. This is just the gray sombre sky under which I should expect to hear some heavy news.

Kensington Gardens looked strange and gloomy to me. The trees moaned slightly in the light wind that seemed to anticipate October. The birds flew low; the round pond, or pool, when I came near it, had a leaden-hued surface, which even the ripples fanned by the wind did not brighten. Leaves detached untimely from the neighboring trees and plants came rustling and rushing down the glades. There rose up and lingered in my mind a verse from a strange, sweet, melancholy song of Uhland's:

> "Ich reit' am finstern Garten hin,
> Die dürren Bäume sausen drin,
> Die welken Blätter fallen.
> Hier pflegt' ich in der Rosenzeit,
> Wann alles sich der Liebe weiht,
> Mit meinem Lieb zu wallen."

No one was near the pond when I reached it, with the mournful cadence of this ballad in my ears and in my soul. As I stood by the margin of the pool there was literally no human being in sight. Not a nursery-maid, not a child even, could be seen. Down this glade or that, wherever I looked, was no form moving. One might have been far away in the country, in the heart of some lonely old park of Queen Anne's time, when the last owner was dead, and the young heir was abroad, and the mansion-house was deserted.

I stood for a while pursuing this sort of thought, and vaguely trifling with my own emotions, as if I were half occupied in turning over the leaves of a book, endeavoring to while away time and to keep down anxiety. It seemed to me at last as if I stood in utter isolation, quite alone. A sort of sea seemed to have risen up and swallowed all my old friends and old associations, and left me planted there. In this moment all the past seemed to wear an aspect of unreality to me. Did I read it all, or find it in the music of some of the operas in which I sang, or dream it out as a poem or a story to be written by me some time? Did a real living Lilla Lyndon ever tell me of a real living love—or is she but the phantom of a woman who would have loved me had she been a creature of life?

In one moment, in one flash, my melancholy meditations were gone—my question was answered. Life came into the silent glade at my left. I saw a woman's figure at the far end of the glade, and though no eye could distinguish features at such a distance, I knew who came with light and rapid step toward me. I knew the figure, the walk of Lilla Lyndon. I did not rush to meet her—no, not yet. I stood and abandoned myself to the unspeakable delight of seeing her come to me. I think I broke into a deep sigh of profound relief and passionate joy. She came nearer and nearer. Thank Heaven for the rare chance that has made these gardens so solitary to-day! She came so near that now I could see every feature of her face, so near that now she saw me; and then I sprang to meet her. A light blush, or flush, came over her face, tinting it all with a delicate momentary rose-color, which deepened almost to the hue of the damask-rose, to the hue of her own lips as I kissed them. I can not describe her as I saw her, and I have no faith in word-descriptions. The light of her face was to me as the light of a star. Other description I have none to give.

"I knew you would come!" she said.

"My love! Lilla!" were the only words I could find in answer.

Then we walked, silent, to the edge of the pond, and sat on one of the seats there; and I took her hand in mine.

"I have sad news," said Lilla, looking up to me with eyes that now floated in tears.

I started. In the selfishness of my love I only thought of some sad news that threatened *it*.

"Poor papa is very, very ill. He has had some cruel attacks of gout lately; and—and he's very bad now indeed. I have only stolen out a moment to see you, because I knew you would be here. I must not stay with you; but he knows I came to see you; and he only said he hoped I would not leave him for long just now. Oh, he spoke so kindly! Under all his manner he has a noble heart. I told you that some day he would appreciate you, and you him; and I only hope and pray it is not too late."

I loved her but the more for her tender, generous illusion. To me it seemed, even in that hour, an illusion. I had outlived faith in the miraculous redemption of selfishness. I could not believe in Mr. Lyndon's noble heart; but I believed all the more in my enemy's daughter.

"You must return, my love," I said. "I will not keep you now—though I hope your affection magnifies the seriousness of the danger. But I will not keep you here—enough that I have seen you to-day."

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"I came because I knew you would be here. I came to tell you—" She hesitated.

"You came to tell me that you have not changed—that I may love you—that you will be my wife?"

"I came to tell you all that," she said, with a bright gleam of light shining for a moment in her eyes and on her face, "if you came to ask me."

Some months after this I received one day a letter from Switzerland. It was dated from Lugano, and this was what it contained:

"My dear Emanuel,—I have just seen Ned Lambert and his wife, and they have brought me news, not unexpected, from England—the news of your approaching marriage. I hear of it with gladness, and with tears that are glad too, but still tears. Oh, how I wish you happiness, and to her who loves you and whom you love! I shall tell her some day that it was I who first discovered her secret, before you did, and told you of it. I have sent her a little gift, a necklace, which she will wear for my sake, and a gift from my husband.

"I was shocked and startled indeed to read of Mr. Lyndon's death. He had many qualities that were good; and I, for one, think of him now only with kindness, and pray for him.

"My husband sends his greetings and congratulations. He hopes for great things in the spring, and bids me tell you the opening of 1859 will be an era. He is, you see, as full of hope and faith as ever.

"And now, dear old friend, friend from youth, almost from childhood, adieu! I shall hold you and your wife always in my heart and in my love, and I am to both the true soul-sister, Christina."

THE END.

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